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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

Jewish Writers—Past and Present

In the award of the Nobel Prize a few years ago to Shmuel Yosef Agnon, two years ago to Saul Bellow, and this year to Isaac Bashevis Singer, three great media of expression of modern Jewry, Hebrew, English and Yiddish—have attained to world recognition. The papers on Jewish literature in this issue are particularly appropriate, therefore, as they start with a review essay by *Edward Alexander* on Singer, two of whose latest books are analysed in it.

The classic figure of the Jew in exile yearning for return to the Holy Land is that of the medieval poet and philosopher, Judah Halevi. After a successful and reasonably happy life in Spain, he left his native land and made the long and dangerous journey toward the land of Israel, whose glories he had sung and the absence from which he had lamented in some of the most poignant pages in literature.

However, the motivations for this famous pilgrimage are more complex than appears at first sight. In her paper, "The Sanctuary of Absence," *Freema Gottlieb* explores the background of Judah Halevi's attitude toward the Holy Land and calls attention to some striking parallels from outside the Jewish experience.

From the time that the ancient Greeks formulated the triad of "the good, the true and the beautiful," the question of the relationship of esthetics and ethics, if any, has been the subject of lively controversy from every conceivable point of view.

In his paper, "Saul Bellow and the Moral Imagination," *Irving Halperin* upholds the classical position that, in a profound and ultimate sense, great literature has a bearing on the good life. He illustrates his thesis by a discussion of the goals underlying the fiction of Saul Bellow. The unconventional form in which his paper is couched is not the least of its charms.

The history of modern German literature is studded with many names of Jewish writers of genius or talent. In their totality, they represent an astonishing degree of variety. Some were thoroughly absorbed into the German environment, while many others lived within two worlds and wrestled with the problem of their Jewishness and their *Deutschtum*.

A special genre of German-Jewish writers corresponds to the regionalists in American literature. Some, like Berthold Auerbach, described the life of Jews in the small villages of southern Germany who retained much of the traditional Jewish way of life. Others pictured the Jewish ghettos on the eastern borders of the German culture-sphere, as in Bohemia and Galicia.

In his paper, "Tradition and Modernity in the German Ghetto Novel" *Lothar Kahn* discusses and analyzes the varying approaches to Jewish life which two authors, Kompert and Franzos, encountered in their own experience and then transmitted imaginatively in their fiction.

Both the reputation of the writer and the quality of the book made the appearance of *To Jerusalem and Back* an important event. *Irving Saposnik*, in "Bellow's Jerusalem: The Road Not Taken," maintains that Bellow, quite naturally, expresses the viewpoint of a Diaspora Jew for whom Jerusalem and Israel are necessary ideal constructs rather than flesh-and-blood realities.

As a Jew living in the Diaspora, the Editor may perhaps be pardoned for suggesting that the dichotomy which Saposnik sets up is not as absolute as he proposes. Certainly many Israelis, from the days of Aaron David Gordon's "religion of labor," to the varied religiously oriented groups in contemporary Israel, are committed to a spiritual vision of Zion. They would insist, to quote Bellow, that "the mental Israel is immense, a country inestimably important, playing a major role in the world as broad as all history." On the other hand, for untold thousands upon thousands of Diaspora Jews, Israel is a flesh-and-blood reality. This is true not only for those who make permanent aliyah, but for the many more who spend extended periods of time there or make frequent visits to it. This demurrer aside, Saposnik's literary and substantive analysis of Bellow's outlook sheds light on the inevitable difference in perception of Jewish life between Israelis and their Diaspora brothers.

Within the significant group of contemporary Jewish writers, Bernard Malamud occupies a unique place. Aside from his high literary gifts, he probably reveals a closer affinity with Jewish tradition and folklore than any other, with the obvious exception of Isaac Bashevis Singer. These are explored by *Marcia B. Gealy* in her paper, "Malamud's Short Stories: A Reshaping of Hasidic Tradition."

Anti-Semitism as a Political Tool?

As the difficult and halting steps toward a *rapprochement* between Israel and Egypt are being taken, with many pitfalls along the way, there is special relevance in the paper by *Howard Adelman* on "Egyptian Anti-Semitism." He traces the history of anti-Jewish feeling which has either been stirred up or been suppressed in Egypt during the past few decades, depending upon the vagaries of government policy.

God and Israel are One in Their Tragedy

One of the most moving concepts to be found in rabbinic literature seeks to underscore the nearness of God to His creatures and His involvement in their destiny. This is the theme of God's sharing the suffering of His people Israel and, with them, experiencing the tragedy of exile.

In 1978, there appeared a German work by a Christian scholar, running to over 500 pages, dealing with God's mourning and lamentation, as presented in rabbinic traditions.

In a considerably briefer treatment, *Melvin Jay Glatt* highlights the content and the motivation involved in the rabbinic perception of "God the Mourner—Israel's Companion in Tragedy."

Zedakah Involves More Than Money

That modern Jews may have lost some of the virtues that characterized their ancestors in the transition to modernity may be true. Yet there is one attribute still deeply rooted in the Jewish psyche: the practice of *zedakah*, concern and aid for the less fortunate whatever the reason or circumstance may be, not as an exercise in condescension, but as the practice of one's rightful duty.

In this day of high-powered and expensively publicized philanthropic agencies, we need to be reminded of the basic ethical imperative taught by the Jewish tradition. Its fundamentals are expounded by *Tsvi Marx* in "Priorities in Zedakah and Their Implications."

What Happens on the Other Side?

One of the liveliest topics of interest among contemporary readers is death, perhaps second only to sex as a subject for treatment in books and articles, in study and discussion courses, in science, literature and art.

No people have lived in closer proximity to death through the ages than Israel. In his paper, "Death Experiences in Rabbinic Literature," *David S. Shapiro* brings to light some of the deepest insights on this ultimate mystery which is basic to the human condition.

Louis Jacobs: An Appraisal

British Jewry has never been a very numerous community, but it has succeeded in producing scholars and leaders whose influence has far transcended the British Isles. In our day, the distinguished rabbinic scholar, Louis Jacobs, occupies a unique position by virtue of his learning, his extensive creative output and his responsiveness to the contemporary world.

Several of his major works and basic insights are presented by *Byron Sherwin* in his paper, "Louis Jacobs: Man of Controversy, Scholar of Distinction."

Helpful Hints for Preachers

Preaching today is not what it used to be—it never was! However, it is undoubtedly true that the temper of our times looks askance at oratory, even of the best kind, in favor of less formal discourse. As a result, the art of preaching no longer commands the degree of preparation lavished

upon sermons by practitioners of the homiletic art until recently. Nevertheless, the sermon remains the central feature at most worship services.

In his paper, "A Rabbi-Physician's Prescription for Effective Sermons: The Earliest Hebrew Preaching Manual," *Henry A. Sosland* uncovers an early "how-to-do-it" guide containing hints for the *darshan*.

A German Looked at Moses

Out of the dim mists of antiquity there rises the greatest figure of all, Moses, liberator, leader, law-giver and teacher, founder of the Jewish nation and creator of the Jewish religion. It is no wonder that historians, theologians, philosophers, poets, artists and ordinary people have all wrestled with this Colossus of the human spirit and conceived of Moses from their own vantage point.

The great German poet, Friedrich von Schiller, was no exception. In the paper, "Schiller on the Mission of Moses," *Sol Liptzin* offers us a variant that came out of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century Germany.

R.G.

The Nobel Prize for I. B. Singer

Review-Essay by EDWARD ALEXANDER

Shosha: A Novel. By ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER. New York. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978. 277 pp. \$8.95.

A Young Man in Search of Love. By ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER. Drawings & Paintings by Raphael Soyer. Garden City, New York. Doubleday, 1978. 177 pp. \$12.95.

THE AWARD OF THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE in 1978 to Isaac Bashevis Singer is an act of tribute and of regret, of celebration and of mourning. It is an acknowledgement of his great gifts of style, evocation, and narrative, but also an elegy to a civilization that was violently destroyed and a language—Yiddish—that is rapidly vanishing. It is a cruel irony that Yiddish literature, in the person of Singer, should receive this high honor at the very time when the Yiddish-speaking world is on the verge of disappearing. The object of ridicule and contempt while it was vital and alive, Yiddish is honored in its demise. What was once the *mameloshen* of millions has now become the *loshen khoydesh* of literary coteries and the subject of academic study. Singer has, to be sure, often said that he believes in the resurrection of the dead, and that “millions of Yiddish-speaking corpses will rise from their graves one day” demanding to read the latest books in their mother tongue. But it is worth noting that in his autobiographical tale, “The Lecture,” the subject of the never-delivered lecture by the Yiddish writer stranded in the snows of Montreal is “an optimistic report on the future of the Yiddish language.” Let us hope that Singer will recover this lost manuscript and make it his speech of acceptance for the Nobel Prize.

Irving Howe has often remarked upon the paradox whereby the very modernism which arouses suspicion and resentment among Yiddish readers of Singer’s fiction has been the basis of his extraordinary and (for Yiddish writers) unparalleled popularity among literary intellectuals whose ignorance of Yiddish is equalled by their indifference to such parochial Jewish concerns as national survival. Howe points out that many intelligent and experienced Yiddish writers are uneasy, even impatient and angry, with Singer’s work because of his heavy stress upon sexuality, his concern for the irrational, the frequent expressionist distortions of character, and a total indifference to the Yiddishist traditions of sentimentality and social justice. Among devotees of literary modernism, however, “for whom the determination not to be shocked has become a point

of honor,"¹ these same characteristics have contributed as much to his high reputation as the less accidental traits of stylistic brilliance and narrative invention.

The modernism which has brought such differing reactions from the Yiddish and the non-Yiddish reading audiences is contained mainly in Singer's voluminous output of short stories. The novels usually operate within the old-fashioned traditions of nineteenth-century realism and deal, unmistakably, with questions of the national destiny of the Jewish people. Although it may not be correct to read the short stories as modernist excursions into diabolism, perversity, and apocalypse, entirely cut off from Singer's novelistic concerns with Jewish religion and Jewish destiny, we can hardly doubt that this is how they are generally read. Whatever may be the reasons for Singer's popularity as a short-story writer with the readers of *The New Yorker*, *Playboy*, and *Esquire*, it is safe to assume that a passionate interest in things Jewish and in the tragic course of Jewish history is not among them. The hordes of students who flock to hear Singer at places like Charlottesville, Virginia or Madison, Wisconsin may safely be assumed to have a keener interest in dybbuks and spooks than in the destroyed Jewish world of Eastern Europe. There may even be a dark political significance in the fact that some of the most ecstatic praise of Singer's modernist brilliance as a short-story writer has appeared in such journals as *The New York Review of Books*, which nobody ever accused of an undue concern with the well-being of Jews.

Nevertheless, the wide appeal of Singer's stories among readers ignorant of, and indifferent to, Jewish religion, Jewish history, Jewish peoplehood, is a literary fact of the first importance because it disproves the fashionable literary prejudice which holds that writing about Jews is an insuperable obstacle to universal appeal. Critics who have blithely assumed that it is the natural destiny of the human race, or of that part of it which reads books, to puzzle over Blake's Zoas and Yeats' gyres and Pound's socio-economic ravings, are invariably brought up short at the prospect of reading books about Jews because, they maintain, the concerns of Jews are not those of universal humanity. Anyone familiar with the body of criticism about the writings of Saul Bellow (not excluding some of that writer's unhappy utterances about his own work) will know that it is one of the smelly little orthodoxies of American literary criticism that the Jewish writer (and he alone) is put to the hard choice of writing as a Jew and for Jews or addressing himself to the principle of Mankind and, therefore, to humanity as a whole.

Singer writes almost always as a Jew, to Jews, for Jews; and yet he is heard by everybody. The audience of Yiddishists often resents him for some of the reasons that it resented Sholem Asch: getting translated, succeeding in reaching the great public through translation, and then

1. "Demonic Fiction of a Yiddish 'Modernist'." *Commentary*, XXX (October 1960): 350.

writing *for* translation. But not even this resentful and suspicious body of readers can accuse him of doing as Asch seemed to them to do, writing explicitly Christian stories in order to gain a wide audience. Singer's tremendous success among critics as well as among ordinary readers seems to illustrate the truth of Cynthia Ozick's contention that, contrary to the apostles (to the Jews, anyway) of universalism, great literature never consciously seeks to be "universal": "Dante made literature out of an urban vernacular, Shakespeare spoke to a small island people, Tolstoy brooded on upper-class Russians, Yeats was the kindling for a Dublin-confined renaissance. They did not intend to address the principle of Mankind; each was, if you will allow the infamous word, tribal. Literature does not spring from the urge to Esperanto, but from the tribe."² Singer himself has always believed that it was only by examining, and not by avoiding, his own memories and experiences as a Jew that he could penetrate to the memories and experiences of mankind, which is an infinitely varied repetition. The award of the Nobel Prize provides striking public confirmation of that belief.

Having said all this, I must reluctantly add that the two books published in this, his *annus mirabilis*, are not among Singer's best. Although it was originally published in Yiddish in the *Forward* in 1974 as *Soul Expeditions*, *Shosha* will strike many of Singer's English readers as a fictionalized version of the autobiographical memoir, *A Young Man in Search of Love*, now that both books have appeared almost simultaneously. *Shosha* is the only one of Singer's translated novels that is written in the first person, and it makes many explicit references to widely-known facts of his early life, from his home address to his difficulties as a Yiddish writer to his conversion to vegetarianism. Those aspects of his own experience and ideas which, in previous novels, were widely distributed among his characters, are here gathered back to their source. Whether this turning in upon himself is a cause or an effect of a diminished creative energy which this novel exhibits is a question that only his future work can answer. *Shosha* is better suited to satisfying the curiosities of readers about Singer's character and personality than to answering the great questions to which even this novel's characters still address themselves: "*What can one do? How is one to live?*"

Shosha, like *The Family Moskat*, is set in Poland between the two World Wars. The inevitability of the Holocaust and the utter powerlessness of the Jews in the face both of Polish anti-Semitism and of Hitler are taken for granted throughout the story. As Aaron Greidinger, the young writer who tells the story, says: "The Jews in Poland are trapped. . . . I know for sure that we will all be destroyed."

Hopeless and helpless before this terrible fate, nearly all of the Jews in the novel live only for the present, pursuing pleasure without regard

2. "America: Toward Yavneh," JUDAISM, XIX (Summer 1970): 275.

for truth or value. "We all," confesses Aaron, "lived for the present—the whole Jewish community." The novel abounds with hedonistic schemes, epitomized by Morris Feitelzohn's ambition to establish a school of hedonism. Aaron says of the American Yiddish actress, Betty Slonim, one of his numerous women, that "She wants the same thing we all do—to grab some pleasure before we vanish forever." Aaron understands only too clearly that the search for happiness is an insatiable appetite which grows by what it feeds on, and that for anyone but a pig the question "Am I happy?" must always be answered in the negative. *Horresco ergo sum* must be the motto of the discriminating sybarite. The most intrepid pursuers of pleasure are the characters who speak obsessively of suicide. This is especially the case with Aaron himself and with Betty (who eventually does take her own life). Suicides are cast by Singer as hedonists who have overreached themselves.

The self-destructive futility of hedonism is hardly a new theme in Singer's novels. But, whereas in the earlier novels the distance established by moral judgment between the novelist and his hedonists was clear and distinct, here it is blurred by what we may suppose to be a kind of nostalgia for his own youthful experiences and aspirations. In his old age, Singer appears to have succumbed to a kind of vanity which boasts of the very exploits which his better self has, throughout his career, treated contemptuously. In *Shosha*, as in *A Young Man in Search of Love*, the subject of sex is a virtual obsession. "In all the novels I had read, the heroes desired only one woman, but here I was, lusting after the whole female gender." Aaron simultaneously carries on affairs with the Communist Dora Stolnitz, with Celia Chentshiner, a married woman, with Betty Slonim, mistress of the American millionaire Sam Dreiman, and with the Polish maid Takla. We can well imagine that Aaron, just like the Singer of *A Young Man in Search of Love*, was so "sated with sex" that he occasionally longed for a night of restful sleep alone in his bed.

In the memoir, Singer recalls how he "frequently fantasized about writing a novel in which the hero was simultaneously in love with a number of women." He has now realized that fantasy several times. But, whereas in *The Magician of Lublin* and *Enemies* each of the hero's women represented some distinct portion of his fragmented life, in *Shosha* the multiplication of lovers seems more a virtuoso performance than a structural and thematic device. The following passage is, alas, typical:

During one night I had found my lost love and then succumbed to temptation and betrayed her. I had stolen the concubine of my benefactor, lied to her, aroused her passion by telling her all my lusty adventures, and made her confess sins that filled me with disgust. I had been impotent and then turned into a sexual giant.

The more Aaron—a wayward yeshivah student—recounts his sexual exploits, the more the reader is likely to be reminded of Artur Sammler's

doubts regarding the fitness of Jews for “this erotic Roman voodoo primitivism. He questioned whether release from long Jewish mental discipline, hereditary training in lawful control, was obtainable upon individual application.”

Ultimately, despite the unseemly relish with which he dwells on what must finally be repudiated, this is also the view of the narrator and his creator as well. It is clear not only that sexuality stands in diametrical opposition to Judaism, but that it derives much of its demonic force from the power of what might be called anti-Judaism. When Aaron takes Betty to visit a prayer house in the Krochmalna ghetto where he had grown up, they are overcome by the sinful urge to thrust their heads inside the ark where they can desecrate the Torah by kissing one another. Thus, even a mode of activity which is intended to overcome the despair that comes with loss of faith turns into a perverse acknowledgement of the power of lapsed faith.

In *Shosha*, it is primarily (not exclusively) religion which resists hedonism. Religion reacts to the imminence of the Holocaust not by living in and for the present, but by dwelling on the past. “In Germany, Hitler had solidified his power, but the Warsaw Jews had celebrated the festival of the exodus out of Egypt four thousand years ago.” The very fact that they live thus in the past implies their belief in a future. Hitlers, like Pharaohs and Chmielnickis, come and wreak havoc and then disappear, are blotted out; but the Jewish people is eternal.

Like Singer, Aaron is the son of a Hasidic rabbi and the beneficiary of a religious education, but has wandered far from Judaism and its world view. Yet, if there are any benefits to be reaped from his emancipation from the Jewish yoke, Aaron has not discovered them.

From the day I had left my father's house I had existed in a state of perpetual despair. Occasionally, I considered the notion of repentance, of returning to real Jewishness. But to live like my father, my grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, without their faith—was this possible?

If Judaism is a form of faith which Aaron Greidinger admires but cannot share, Communism is a substitute religion which he neither shares nor wishes to share. In *A Young Man in Search of Live*, Singer recalls how, in the 1920s, he was “surrounded on all sides by the faithful who all believed in something. . . .” This is not quite the picture of Polish Jewry which *Shosha* gives us, for here the predominant impression that the characters give is one of hedonism, lassitude, and nihilism. But primary among the faithful from whom Aaron is estranged by his sceptical pessimism are the Communists. These are epitomized by his lover Dora Stolnitz, whose great goal is to settle in Soviet Russia, the socialist utopia. Dora's “big, fluttering eyes” are her only attractive physical feature, reflecting, as they do, “a blend of cunning and the solemnity of one who assumed the mission of saving mankind.”

It is, of course, axiomatic in Singer (as well as being true) that the pseudo-religious desire to help “mankind” invariably leads to cruelty on a massive scale. This is because the worship of mankind is nothing other than idolatry, and idolatry is always cruel and pitiless. In both books, it is the Enlightened Jew who, above all others, has become “a master of specious theories, of perverse truths, of seductive utopias, of false remedies. Since the gentile world needed its idols, the modern Jew had emerged to provide new ones.”

Both the memoir and the novel serve to remind us that Singer is that rarity among modern Jews, an intellectual who seems never to have been tempted by leftist sloganeering and utopianism. *A Young Man in Search of Live* gives us an unsavory picture of a cadre of leftist bullies, from Isaac Deutscher to the Stalinist hacks of the Writers Club who warn Singer that he will be hanged from the nearest lamppost on the day of the revolution. What a tedious lot these Jewish leftists are! But their dullness never deflects Singer from the recognition of their murderous potential:

I was shocked to see how bloodthirsty Jewish boys and girls had become. Two thousand years of exile, ghetto, and Torah hadn't created a biological Jew. All it took was a few pamphlets and speeches to erase everything the books of morals had tried to imbue in us throughout the generations.

Singer acknowledges that he, too, worshiped idols, the idol of love (as we have already noted) and the idol of literature. Both books dwell on the special difficulties of the Yiddish writer, who felt isolated and frustrated not only because his choice of such a vocation made him a *meshumad* (apostate) in the eyes of the religious, but, also, because he was “stuck with a language and culture no one recognized outside of a small circle of Yiddishists and radicals.” Here was a sort of double exile. Religious Jews were not conciliated by the fact that you wrote about secular, European subjects in Hebrew letters; but those same Hebrew letters decisively shut you out from the world of secular European culture.

In *Shosha*, Aaron finds that the Yiddish theater requires a young writer to sully his art with commercial and personal considerations. His friend, Feitelzohn, tells Aaron that his fortune (in love as well as money) is made if he will only pack his play “‘with all the love and sex it can take.” When Aaron expresses his reluctance to turn the play into trash, Feitelzohn chides him:

Theater is trash by definition. There's no such thing as a sustaining literary play. . . . Today's Jews like three things—sex, Torah, and revolution, all mixed together. Give them those and they'll raise you to the skies.

Singer's picture of the Yiddish theater is not wholly unattractive, for alongside the *shund* (trash) exists a considerable vitality. But Aaron, despite the advances he receives (in money from Sam and in another form

from Betty), cannot make his peace with the high-flown vulgarity of the Yiddish stage.

Even when Aaron finds his proper subject—the false messianism that Singer's own first novel dealt with—he senses that the literary vocation cannot provide a substitute for the life-giving bread of the Jewish religion from which he has separated himself. Even if writers were not—as they are—a treacherous group, even if the Yiddish theater were not—as it is—trash, literature can never take the place of religion. When he reflects on his dismal life among emancipated belles-lettrists and enlighteners, Aaron castigates himself for having “thrown away four thousand years of Jewishness and exchanged it for meaningless literature, Yiddishism, Feitelzohnism.” Neither his pursuit of pleasure nor his flight from religion can succeed, the former because it grows by what it feeds on, the latter because “We are running away and Mount Sinai runs after us.”

Unable either to escape God or to return to Him, immersed in hedonism yet revolted by it, committed to a literary career yet aware of its inability to supply the spiritual nourishment he craves, Aaron Greidinger—to the astonishment and consternation of all his friends—makes a great leap backward by marrying his childhood sweetheart, Shosha Schuldiener. When asked what he can possibly see in this physically and mentally backward girl, arrested at the stage of childhood, Aaron answers: “I see myself.” He sees not, to be sure, himself as he has become but himself as he would have been if time had stood still and he had remained within the confines, mental as well as physical, of the ghetto.

In its defiance of time and change, Aaron's attachment to Shosha symbolizes his idea of the aim of literature: “to prevent time from vanishing.” Ultimately, however, it was not time and change which destroyed Shosha and so many of Aaron's friends and their world but the external violence of the Holocaust. For the writer who tells the story of the novel, literature has become the instrument for preserving the memory, and even resurrecting the souls, of the dead.

This elegiac sense is largely absent from *A Young Man in Search of Love*. The book is more a series of anecdotes—some of them brilliantly rendered—than the autobiography of a mind. It is also lacking in contour, sense of proportion, and narrative development. The book simply stops rather than concluding, and the complete absence of dates from what purports to be a factual account is frustrating. The book is handsomely printed, and beautifully illustrated by Raphael Soyer, but nobody at Doubleday appears to have bothered to proofread it. This is a specially glaring omission in a story about a writer who for many years supported himself as—a proofreader.

The Sanctuary of Absence

FREEMA GOTTLIEB

I.

I SHOULD LIKE TO EXAMINE THE QUALITY of Yehuda Halevi's feeling for Zion by viewing his poetry against the historical and intellectual climate of his day and by looking at his famous "Zion Ode" in relation to a short passage from his prose philosophical work, the *Kuzari*.

The *Kuzari* is a dramatized interchange between the King of the Khazars who, with all his subjects, had converted to Judaism, and his Jewish advisor. The topics range from the adulteration of the Hebrew language by Arabisation, to speculations on astronomy and metaphysics. The whole thing is plainly a pretext for Halevi's winnowing out of his own ideas. It is towards the end of the *Kuzari* that he becomes most autobiographical. To the Minister's request for permission to leave the Land of the Khazars for Jerusalem, the King voices a doubt that must have been in Halevi's own mind.

What is there to seek in Jerusalem nowadays, since the *divine reflex* is absent from it, whilst with a pure mind and desire one can sense the closeness of God in any place? Why will you run into danger, on land and water and among various peoples?¹

And the reply is:

The *visible* Shechinah (Presence of God) has indeed disappeared . . . but the *invisible and spiritual* Shechinah . . . (We think he is going to say "has never departed from the Place of the Temple," but no . . .) is with every born Israelite of virtuous life, pure heart, and upright mind before the Lord of Israel.²

This, however, is no refutation of the arguments of the King; rather, it serves to confirm them. The Presence of God rests on people rather than on places, and it is associated with places because of the holiness of the people who live there.³ There was, in fact, a belief that, when the Jewish People went into exile, the Shechinah accompanied them. In any

1. David DeSola Pool, "Selections from Yehuda Halevi's Defense of His Faith (*The Kuzari*)," in *Yehuda Halevi-Sweet Singer of Zion* (New York: Zionist Organization of America, Dept. of Youth & Education, 1941), p. 26.

2. DeSola Pool, p. 27.

3. See Rashi on Genesis 25.10, "When a righteous man leaves a place a real loss is felt. When a good man lives in a city he is its pride, he is its beauty, he is its glory, and when he leaves, the pride, beauty, glory, of the city depart with him."

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case, in an earlier passage in the *Kuzari*, Halevi is quite explicit in his opinion that the Jerusalem of his time was devoid of the Divine Presence:

Persians, Indians, Greeks . . . spent their wealth at that place . . . (and) honoured it to this day, *although the Shechinah no longer appears there*. All nations make pilgrimage to it, and long for it, excepting ourselves, because we are punished and are in disgrace.⁴

So we see that when, at the age of fifty, Halevi decided to give up his position of honour at the Spanish court to defy the divinely imposed sentence of banishment and to make pilgrimage to Zion, it was not because of any holiness that he could claim was associated with it at the time.

In his poems, too, Halevi suggests that God, being Omnipresent, is not to be confined by any physical "place."

Lord, where shall I find Thee?
High and hidden is Thy place;
And where shall I not find Thee?
The world is full of Thy glory
Found in the innermost being . . .
The Refuge of the near . . .
The whirling world cannot contain Thee;
How then the chambers of a Temple?⁵

God can be found deep within or far beyond, but is not to be confined within the four walls of a temple. Halevi seems to be contradicting his own life's quest for one particular "place."

There is a belief that when the Shechinah accompanied the Jewish People into exile it was for the sake of the children. Therefore, by leaving his daughter and grandson behind him in Spain, Halevi was, in fact, placing an increasing distance between himself and the Shechinah, and his journey to Zion was a plunging in to the uttermost depths of exile which, yet, he seemed to welcome. The paradox stands that he was perhaps at his *furthest* from the Shechinah when he lay huddled in the shadows of the ruined Temple, embracing its stones. Therefore, logically knowing this, why did he go? What, in fact, was the answer to the arguments of the King of the Khazars?

2

Yehuda Halevi (1086–1142) wrote his greatest poetry out of a specific historic context—the repercussions on a dispersed Israel of the Crusades and the Spanish *reconquista*. It was in both Halevi's spiritual homeland—

4. DeSola Pool, p. 25.

5. "God in All," *Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi*, trans. by Nina Salaman, ed. Heinrich Brody (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924), p. 168.

6. Henry Slonimsky, "Yehuda Halevi—Genius of Israel," in *Yehuda Halevi—Sweet Singer of Zion*, p. 13.

Israel, and his physical birthplace—Spain, that the forces of the two world powers of East and West, Christianity and Islam, were grappling with each other. In 1095, a great idealism and yearning for the Holy Land swept through Europe, distracting people from their internal social problems, driving them to leave their homes, with the exaggerated chivalry of knighthood, in order to rescue this captive foreign princess “from the heathen.” Their mission was just as mystically portentous—and ridiculous—on the plane of history as was the quest for the Grail in that of the imagination.

The clash between Christianity and Islam broke Spain in two, with the contours of its borders continually shifting and Jewish refugees being shuttled in their flight from Christian massacre to Moslem forced conversion and often back again. In his writings, Halevi makes the painful position of the Jews between these two great powers obvious: “Between the armies of Seir and Kedar my army is lost. Whenever they fight their fight it is *we* who fall, and thus it has always been in Israel.” And also—“The enemies battle like wild beasts, the princes of Eliphaz with the rams of Nevayot, but between the two the young sheep are undone.”⁷ While the two materialistic forces of East and West were massing on the border of the Holy Land, those who had the spiritual link with it were dispersed in alien countries and without the physical possibility of taking possession. “Whichever conquers or is conquered/Still woe is with my people.”⁸ In himself, the Jew internalized the dissensions taking place on the plane of history:

My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west . . .
Zion lies beneath the fetters of Edom (Europe), and I in Arab chains.⁹

It is almost as if, in his capacity as poet or prophet, Halevi wished to reenact in his individual life the drama of his nation and of the world, to take upon himself the warring distances of East and West and to initiate a token Return by bringing back one single captive to the captive Land.

3

The quality of Halevi's yearning for the Land can be fitted into the tradition of courtly love which was filtering from Arab Spain to Provençal France and was to set the stage for the first flowering of romantic lyricism in Europe. Just as the Troubadour revels in the very agonies of distance separating him from the Beloved, so Halevi stresses the fact of exile and the intensification of passion that is the concomitant of frustration. On board the ship which was carrying him to the East, he took a romantic delight in his sea-sickness:

7. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

8. Michael Alper, “Yehuda Halevi—The Great National Hebrew Poet,” in *Yehuda Halevi—Sweet Singer of Zion*, pp. 6–10.

9. “My Heart Is In the East,” trans., Nina Salaman, p. 2.

The billows rage—exult, O soul of mine,
Soon shalt thou enter the Lord's sacred shrine.¹⁰

But separation, suffering is not enough. Consummation is possible only through the "death in love." Arab mystics contemporary with Halevi regarded Moses as the prototype of the Lover—who saw God, glimpsed the Holy Land from a distance, and died with the "Divine Kiss" upon his lips.¹¹ Halevi himself was perhaps able to enter in to the Land physically only because the Presence had withdrawn. According to the story, he was lying prostrate on the ruins of the Temple when an Arab horseman trampled him down, and so he died in the very moment of ecstasy.

A Provençal poet, Jauffré Rudel, writing about twenty to thirty years after Halevi, has been credited, in popular imagination, with a similar type of death, and the quality of his love may help to shed light on Halevi's devotion to Jerusalem personified as a woman.

Rudel is said to have fallen in love—on pure hearsay—with the Princess of Tripoli, captivated by the reports he had heard of her kindness to pilgrims on the way from Antioch to the Holy Land.¹² After writing many verses to his "faraway" princess, he finally took up his cross and set sail to find her, but on board ship he fell ill and by the time he landed in Tripoli he was dying. His men carried him to an inn where his "Lady" came to visit him and, when he had realised into whose presence he had finally come, he recovered his senses of sight and smell and greeted her, "praising God for that moment." The Princess, after arranging his funeral, took the veil "from sorrow," says the old autobiography, but we may feel it was unlikely that any one should change her whole style of life out of sorrow at the death of a man whom she had hardly known and, therefore, could hardly have missed. The ending of the story, just because it is romantic, is unsatisfactory from a psychological point of view. What was the nature of the yearning which could impel mature men like Halevi and Rudel to give up all that had composed the reality of their lives until that point and venture out into the unknown? And why did the Princess of Tripoli take the veil?

A parallelism between mystical feeling and eroticism in the rhetoric of love at this time is clearly illustrated by the Rudel story. Because of the lack of psychological realism in the legend, scholars have said that Rudel was not simply in love with a woman, that it is the subjective yearning that is important, not the shadowy image on whom it is projected.¹³ Themes of

10. Alper, p. 9.

11. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. by Montgomery Belgion, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1974), p. 106.

12. *Medieval SONG*, TRANS. BY James J. Wilhelm (New York: Dutton, 1971), pp. 130–2, especially the footnote on p. 130. For the biography of Rudel see *Songs of the Troubadors*, ed. Anthony Bonner (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 61 and note on p. 248. Factually true or not, this is the tale that has moved writers like Uhland, Heine, Carducci, and Swinburne.

13. Bonner, p. 261, suggests the different possibilities for the object of Rudel's devotion, including the "love of love," and note 5 on p. 251 touches on this point. Scholars have seen Rudel's beloved as a figure for Mary or for the Holy Land.

pilgrimage in his writings and the fact that he took up a cross on his journey heighten the mystery as to his true objective. In fact, Rudel took part in the Second Crusade, and his “unseen beauty” has received various interpretations. His subject is a real woman, the “love of love,” the Virgin Mary, whose cult was flourishing amidst the general adulation of Woman that was current at the time. She also has been regarded as the feminine aspect of Divinity which mystics of all religions were accentuating at that period. Motifs of the journey, the pilgrimage, the sea voyage, stress a willingness to share the fate of his beloved who is captive among the Saracens—

Even in the realm of the Saracens
I'd gladly suffer the captive's cries!¹⁴

make the fairly obvious connection between the enigmatic Lady of the Crusader-Poet and the subject of Halevi's song—the Shechinah, and the place where it is manifested—Jerusalem.

Rudel's emphasis on the magical sexual properties of the Lady's physical presence as a kind of Paradisal enclosure conveys both mystical and erotic resonances:

Abiding in such a dwelling place
That her room, that her garden space
Will always assume palatial size!

Halevi's “Zion Ode” also dwells on the womblike concavity of Zion as the precious container of God's Presence and the Fathers of the Jewish People.¹⁵ He emphasizes the “desolation” when those Presences have been withdrawn and Zion is like an empty husk, a place where, if the Shechinah is present at all, it is “hidden,” contracted into the innermost depths. Yet it is precisely this experience of utter negation that attracts the Poet. He wishes to make contact with the Shechinah, to walk barefoot, so as to touch the dust of a former holiness.

4.

For convenience, the “Ode” can be divided into three major sections and a short introduction of formalised greeting from a representative of exiled Israel (himself) to his equally exiled “Lady.” Thus, three main parts cover Zion Past, Present and Future. Although, within the contemporary context that makes up the middle section, Zion is pictured as without the Shechinah, this negative view is flanked on both sides by a dream of the past and a vision of the future in which Jerusalem and the Shechinah are reconciled. The introduction anticipates the turn of future events:

¹⁴. Wilhelm, pp. 131–2.

¹⁵. “Ode to Zion,” trans. Salaman, pp. 3–7.

To wail for thine affliction I am like the jackals;
 But when I dream
 Of the return of thy captivity, I am a harp for
 Thy songs.

Already in the present, although the situation is sad enough, the future can be brought near through the power of song. The present political abasement of Israel, as signified by "jackals," is contrasted with the royal Davidic resonances that arise with "I am a harp for thy songs," as we remember that David was the first singer and harpist of Zion. At this point the poet has signified, though impersonally, his own function within the poem. The feelings of the People find expression through him. He is a passive instrument through whom the "songs of Zion" can find voice.

On this note, the time scheme shifts sharply away from hopes of future redemption back to the past, and a whole series of places are listed:

My heart to Bethel and Peniel yearneth sore,
 To Mahanaim and to all the places where thy pure
 Ones have met.

So it is not only Jerusalem, but every landmark of the encounter between the Fathers of Israel with the Divine. Each place presents a small slit in the curtain of impenetrability which God has placed between Himself and the world.

And then comes what is surely one of the most poignant lines: "There the Shechinah is present in thee . . ." But the Hebrew word for "is present" itself comes from the root of "Shechinah." There the Shechinah is on familiar terms with thee, treats thee like a neighbour, like a friend, is close and companionable and intimate with thee, filling and penetrating with the warmth of a lover:

. . . yea, there thy Maker
 Opened thy gates to face the gates of heaven.

Again, the obvious sexual overtones of the concave "place" and the unsealed gate. It is as if the gates of Jerusalem on earth were directly fronting the gates of a Heavenly Jerusalem as close as the meeting of two pair of lips.

Halevi was obsessed by history, and it is that which is at the root of his identification with the Land. Israel as a physical location inspires his songs because there "God was revealed unto thy seers and messengers." Just as the Troubadour Crusader fell in love "on hearsay," so it was national tradition and not personal experience that stirred in Halevi the springs of deepest feeling. For him the ancestral graves are alive! The very motes of dust held suspended in the air are not dirt, but shot through with the light of Shechinah. The atmosphere throbs with intense spiritual activity, literally the "life of souls."

Zion is alike the symbol of political power, the “House of Royalty” and of spiritual revelation, the “Throne of the Lord.” But, in Halevi’s day, these two functions were divorced from each other, as the temporal suzerainty over Jerusalem remained a subject of dispute between Christianity and Islam. His contempt lashes out against the “dogs” who rend the “lions’ whelps,” the “ravens” who tear at “eagles” and the “slaves” who occupy the thrones of princes. Clearly, in such figures as “lions” and “eagles” the poet equates Israel with true royalty.

An intrinsic feature of Halevi’s method is that he takes Biblical words and phrases and weaves all their richness of association into his poems. Within one short stanza, for example, there are echoes from two different sources in the Bible. The lines read:

O who will make me wings, that I may fly afar,
And lay the fragment of my cleft heart among thy broken cliffs.¹⁶

The first line derives from Psalm 55, 8–10: “Would that I had the wings of a dove, / That I might fly away / And that I might find a resting place. / I should certainly make my nest very far away, / And I should lodge in the wilderness.”¹⁷ In the poem, the landscape of the wilderness and of the “broken cliffs” is set deep within the heart of civilised Jerusalem, the desolate place to which Halevi made his way from cultivated Spain. In the second line, the Hebrew words for “fragments,” “cleft” and “broken” recall the Biblical “Covenant of the Pieces” in which the gift of the Land and the promise that there would be children to inherit it is sealed between God and Abraham by a puzzling ritual involving the elaborate arrangement of slices of a three year old heifer, a three year old she-goat, and a three year old ram, while a turtledove and a young pigeon are released overhead.¹⁸ According to the various commentaries, the birds are supposed to be symbolic of Israel rising above the corpses of historic civilisations. What is clear is that the bird imagery links both of these references, and is the means by which the poet connects his own fate to that of the Jewish People. But the bird, as well as being figurative of Israel, has always stood for both Divine and poetic inspiration; the dove represents the Shechinah, in fact, or the lofty imagination of the poet, wheeling above the deserted landscape, hovering over the desolate nest, and peopling it with presences past and to come.

But Halevi has not yet entered into Zion. Like a bird he soars over the highest rocks, and like Moses and Aaron he surveys the whole sweep of the Land from the mountains on the other side of the Jordan. Although the past brings back memories of a Zion rich with ornaments of love and grace, now she is stripped of her finery as of her lovers. But Halevi insists that it is not so. Even in her nakedness she can wear, like a jewel, the

16. Ibid.

17. Free translation by the present writer.

18. Genesis 15.

yearning of those who suffer with her in her loneliness. This passage harks back to the Introductory Greeting, and goes into the reciprocity which constitutes relationship. There we were told that Zion must respond to the greetings of her well-wishers, and here, also, she is depicted as not utterly deserted, so long as she has companions to rejoice in her happiness and feel pain over her desolation—

They that from the pit of the captive, pant
towards thee, worshipping,
Every one from his own place, toward thy gates.

In an earlier passage, the gates of Jerusalem are seen as opening out on the gates of Heaven, but here they verge directly on to the gates of every individual member of Israel wherever he might be in exile. That is, Jerusalem is at once the mediator between God and Israel, and every physical place opens out on to this unique of all places.

Halevi sees himself as the last in the line of glorious Jewish kings and prophets and singers. Again the word “singers” acts as a kind of hinge, opening the gates prophetically upon the future. The next stanza begins with the Hebrew word *yishneh* which can mean “old” and “new,” “changing” and “causing something to happen a second time,” and the whole movement of the poem is cyclical—Past, Present, and a Future that is a renewal of the Past.

Let him renew it. Let him wholly sweep away
All the dominion of idols (the political powers
of Christianity and Islam)
Thy splendour is for ever, from age to age
Thy crown.

Again the twin concepts of temporal authority and timeless spirituality are united in Jerusalem and the Presence of the Shechinah is renewed:

Thy God hath desired thee for a dwelling-place; and
happy is the man
Whom He chooseth and bringeth near that he may rest
within thy courts.

In the renewal of the Divine Presence within Zion, the Poet sees the symbol of his personal rejuvenation. And so he anticipates the miracle—arching over the deserted Sanctuary, to warm those ruins with the dried-up body of an old man, and in order to die there.

5.

In fact, the Scholar had no answer, from the logical point of view, to give to the King of the Khazars as to the “place” for God in a country depopulated of Jews. He might even have agreed with the king, but reversed the line of argument. Bring back one old Jew to the Land, one

brokendown poet, and the inspiration that he carries with him will set in motion the process of renewal. At least he answers something of the kind. His response is all on an emotional level.

Jerusalem can be rebuilt only when Israel yearns for her to such an extent that they embrace her stones and her dust¹⁹

Which forces the collapse of Heavenly decrees, and the King of the Khazars replies:

If this be so, it would be a sin to hinder thee.

19. DeSola Pool, p. 27.



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Saul Bellow and the Moral Imagination

IRVING HALPERIN

SOMETIMES, IN THE QUIET REACHES OF THE night, I have imaginary conversations with Saul Bellow's personae. I especially enjoy conversing with Artur Sammler because he is so intelligent, informed, perspicacious. Though over 70, he has an exceedingly young, alert mind. I have the impression that in temperament and outlook he resembles the writer of *Mr. Sammler's Planet*.

We have had some spirited discussions about Bellow's work. He has an intimate, firm grasp of the stories and novels: indeed, Sammler has an impressive talent for literary criticism. But, thank God, he does not employ high-powered critical language which impresses only the uninitiated and susceptible. Whether discoursing on literature or life, he speaks like a *mentsh* speaking to *mentshen*.

It somewhat amuses him that, in teaching a Bellow seminar, I began by dutifully enumerating a list of questions which recur from *Dangling Man* to *Humboldt's Gift* and in the short stories, essays and lectures. Such questions as: How should a good man live? What does it mean to be "exactly human"? How does one come to know and to meet the "terms of the contract"?

"What earnest questions, professor," he has remarked.

I know what prompts the irony in his voice. He knows how funny we teachers of literature can be when we take ourselves too seriously. Once, after I had spoken to him of a published critique in which an academic did an elaborate statistical analysis of the imagery in Bellow's novels, Sammler commented, "Deep readers of the world, beware. You have nothing to lose but your common sense."

What I wish to relate here is one of our recent conversations. Afterwards, Sammler referred to it as a marathon literary night. It began when he casually inquired what I was up to these days in the happy vales of academe.

"I'm girding to write a paper on Saul Bellow and the moral imagination."

"The moral what!" he said with mock astonishment. "Explain that, please."

"It's difficult to define," I admitted. "In the broadest sense, I mean the kind of imagination which formulates and probes questions concerning the moral life of man; questions that Bellow has considered for over

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thirty-three years. As you know, Sammler, he does not take the public responsibilities of the writer lightly. In essays such as "The Writer as Moralist," "Recent American Fiction," and "Where Do We Go From Here: The Future of Fiction," he stated his view of the writer's obligations to his readers. And in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he even more insistently adumbrated his thoughts on this matter:

Out of the struggle at the center has come an immense, painful longing for a broader, more flexible, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for. At the center, humankind struggles with collective powers for its freedom, the individual struggles with dehumanization for the possession of his soul. If writers do not come again into the center it will not be because the center is pre-empted. It is not. They are free to enter, if they so wish.

A caveat is needed here. Nowhere has Bellow intimated that he has *the* answers to the questions of 'what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for.' Human life, by definition, is complex; the mystery of the Self increases, he has said, or at least it does not grow less as we continue to discard familiar conceptions of human nature. He would agree with Tolstoy that certain questions are put to mankind not that men should answer them but that they should go on forever trying."

"Professor, I'm relieved to hear that by moral imagination you don't have a tidy picture of Bellow proclaiming with Manichean certitude that this is good, this is evil, this is right, this is wrong. Because simple-minded antithesis is just not his way. He is neither a nagging nay-sayer nor an ostrich yea-sayer. Neither is he a purveyor of *Ladies' Home Journal* messages. Any reader who is looking for easy messages in his work should be referred to Ernest Hemingway's recommendation: 'If you're looking for messages, try Western Union.' But I'm curious as to why you're interested in this subject."

"Why? Well, in an age when the pressures of history and society are increasingly directed toward depersonalization and the corruption of consciousness, Bellow has dedicated the whole of his literary life to dramatizing the importance of preserving our concrete, essential humanity. In so doing, he has not backed off from the task of teaching, as have so many contemporary writers who automatically endorse the fashionable conceit that the fiction writer as a conscious teacher is an embarrassment to sophisticated readers, especially those who have a pristine belief in the primacy of art for art's sake. So, very simply, I view Bellow as an important teacher."

"Heresy, professor!" Sammler broke in, archly. "For shame! And you a True Blue academic? Shouldn't you know better than to promulgate such an old-fashioned notion? You're not interested in the structural relationships of his fiction? In the novelistic qualities? Their narrative devices? Really, you sound like a disciple of Matthew Arnoldian sweetness

and light. My dear fellow, if that's your literary cup of tea, how quaint! Besides, it distresses me that you seem to imply that Bellow is indifferent to the claims of good writing."

"Not so, Sammler, not so. Of course Bellow is concerned with the technical aspects of his craft. After all, he has asserted that a badly written book is immoral, and that the unpardonable sin for a writer is to be boring. Let the writer be didactic, ideological, polemical, but—Bellow insists on this—he must be interesting. Otherwise why should he be read? 'A dull book is wicked,' he wrote in 'The Writer as Moralist.' 'It may intend to be as good as gold, as nice as pie, as sweet as can be, but if it is banal and boring, it is evil.' Indifferent to the claims of good writing? This hardly describes Bellow, a supreme artist."

"Say, that was quite a speech, professor. So what this all comes to is that you see Bellow as a writer-teacher of moral significance."

I nodded.

"Then, specifically, what is it that he teaches?"

"Yes, I have been much too general. So I will turn to the texts, to particular passages in the novels. Still, I have some qualms about imposing on your patience."

"I would be most interested," he said with old world politeness.

"You sure you have the time?"

"When you are my age, time is *all* you have. Time and eternity. So commence the seminar. Only please don't go overtime."

"All right. To begin with, there is the key question which reverberates throughout Bellow's fiction: How should a good man live? First voiced by the protagonist of *Dangling Man*, this question is still being probed in his last three novels. All of Bellow's heroes desire to be virtuous, they all want to believe in 'archetypes of goodness.' But let us move on to the texts, starting with a passage that stands at the center of *The Victim*, if not at the center of all Bellow's fiction, and that may be likened to a tree trunk whose branches are the themes and leitmotifs of the novels. How should a good man live? By being 'exactly human,' Schlossberg, a wise, elderly Yiddish journalist advocates:

I'll tell you. It's bad to be less than human and it's bad to be more than human. What's more than human? . . . Caesar, if you remember, in the play wanted to be like a god. Does a statue have wax in its ears? Naturally not. It doesn't sweat, either, except maybe blood on holidays . . . Less than human is the other side of it. I'll come to it. So here is the whole thing, then. Good acting is what is exactly human. And if you say I am a tough critic, you mean I have a high opinion of what is human. This is my whole idea. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don't either.

A moment later, having acknowledged that life can be 'lousy and cheap' but that man has 'greatness and beauth,' Schlossberg adds: 'Have dignity, you understand me? Choose dignity. Nobody knows enough to turn it down.'

It is as though the phrase 'exactly human' bursts into a shower of sparks which light up the pages of *The Victim* and subsequently illuminate the territories of Bellow's succeeding novels. Exactly human: standing neither too stiffly upright nor with unduly bowed shoulders; recognizing that, though one is an imperfect creature, this is no cause for self-laceration; it is no cause for self-inflation either. Because human life may well be somewhere between greatness and insignificance, Bellow writes in "The Sealed Treasure," 'we can stop misrepresenting ourselves to ourselves and realize that the only thing we can be in this world is human.'

Here, Sammler, who appeared to have been listening patiently, said: "It seems to me that Schlossberg described the Jewish ethic of *mentshlekhkayt*, the imperative for a man to be a *mentsh*. With this addendum: *mentshlekhkayt* for Bellow's heroes cannot function in a solipsistic vacuum but only in the company of other men. As Herzog puts it: 'I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human.'"

"That sounds right, Sammler. And it is from this perspective, this belief in the primacy of being 'exactly human' that one can grasp three tenets of Bellow's teaching. I will list them and then elaborate on each in turn. One can be exactly human by accepting the mixture of things, by hallowing the experiences and primary feelings of ordinary existence, and by meeting one's responsibilities to others.

What does it mean, in Bellovian terms, to accept the mixture of things? This is, I believe, a venerable Jewish point of view. Human perfection, spotless idealism, immaculate benevolence, saintly behavior are absolute qualities beyond the grasp of most mortal beings. Our understanding of the human condition can never be more than, at best, approximate. Therefore, wisdom dictates that we willingly accept the mixture in ourselves of sagacity and foolishness, high aspirations and limited capacities, pride and self-depreciation, spontaneity and constraint. But let us hear Bellow on this in his introduction to the anthology, *Great Jewish Short Stories*: 'We make what we can of our condition with the means available. We must accept the mixture as we find it—the impurity of it, the tragedy of it, the hope of it.' This same notion is expressed in *The Adventures of Augie March* when Augie muses:

I had the idea that you don't take so wide a stance that it makes human life impossible, not try to bring together irreconcilables that destroy you, but try out what of human you can live with first . . . take the mixture and say imperfection is always the condition as found . . .

Accepting the mixture of things may be thought of as a kind of code phrase for accepting one's self with all one's weaknesses and shortcomings; and this is precisely what Herzog eventually does. Recall his state of mind at the end of the novel: the self-flagellation is done with. No more letters, mailed and unsent, to a specialist on the Gold-Pore theory, the President of the United States, Nietzsche, a Skid Row minister,

Adlai Stevenson, General Eisenhower, Martin Heidegger, and the credit department at Marshall Field & Co. in Chicago. He has made peace, at least for the time being, with the contradictions and irreconcilables within himself. Reclining on a couch in his Massachusetts country home, listening to birds, watching the sunset sky, Herzog has no further complaints to make of the universe, no more messages for anyone. He finally has chosen to be Herzog, recognizing that no one else can be that man for him."

I paused, uncomfortably aware that what may have started out to be a dialogue had become a monologue. Still, Sammler seemed to have been listening attentively, and his silences are seldom dull.

"Professor, I have no quarrel with your remarks, but they do seem a bit on the heavy side. Nowhere in your discourse did I hear a reference to laughter. Yes, Henderson and Herzog suffer and their sufferings are real, not imaginary. But, from time to time, unlike Wilhelm, they can see the comedy of their circumstances. And Bellow is laughing with them. But not the laughter of a writer who is back stage, indifferent to the feelings of his characters. Rather, he brings laughter and irony leavened with a warm playful affection to the rendering of his heroes' misadventures. I am tempted to suggest that Bellow's essential attitude toward Herzog and Henderson—yes, and Wilhelm—is characteristically Jewish in that it combines laughter and compassion, except that in this time of specialists in the scientific study of ethnicity, one must be most careful not to generalize. A warm, playful affection, yes. Perhaps a sympathetic sigh. But not crocodile tears and not, to use a Herzogian figure of speech, low-grade universal potato love. Bellow has too sturdy an intelligence to allow compassion to melt into schmaltz; and he has a low threshold for chronic complaint. So that when Wilhelm despairs over trifles, Bellow's epigram is in order: 'There is grandeur in cursing the heavens, but when we curse our socks we should not expect to be taken seriously.'"

"Your observation is well taken, Sammler; I had given short shrift to Bellow's rich talent for comedy. But to go on to another tenet of his teaching. How should a good man live? By welcoming the common experiences and primary feelings of everyday existence. Herzog gives voice to this belief in declaring that 'the strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity' is 'measured by his ordinary life.' What does the term ordinary life mean? You have given this question a good deal of thought, Sammler, so I would value your explanation."

"Well, I'll try for a partial one. You see, extraordinary is what our consumer-amusement society pressures us to be. So many people in a fever to burst the limits of common life, to rise above its ordinary functions. One hears them howling with adolescent fury: I want! I want! Give me more! Unable to endure restraint, driven by flamboyant appetites, demanding instant gratification, they hanker after the exotic, the distant, the arcane, the most elaborate and convulsive sensations. In contrast, Bellow's work speaks directly to the wisdom of hallowing the experiences

of ordinary existence, of tasting the pleasures of the everyday world and in the place where one stands. Anyway, and this is a question I raise in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, 'what is "common" about the "common life"? What if some genius were to do with "common life" what Einstein did with matter? Finding its energetics, uncovering its radiance.' My point here is stated in another way by Henderson when, after being exposed to an African guru and a course in lion therapy, he says: 'I am a true adorer of life, and if I can't reach as high as the face of it, I plant my kiss somewhere lower down.'

"It occurs to me, Sammler, that we have not yet spoken of the source for the ordinary existence theme; and that source is in Bellow's past as the son of poor immigrant parents who were closely connected to the religious and cultural traditions of East European Jewry. In describing his childhood, Bellow remembers that 'Every child was immersed in the old Testament as soon as he could understand anything, so that you began life by knowing Genesis in Hebrew by heart at the age of four. You never got to distinguish between that and the outer world.'

The Canada of his boyhood was anything but easy. What Herzog recalls of his early days in the Jewish slums of Montreal cannot be entirely unfamiliar to Bellow.

The snow was spoiled and rotten with manure and litter, dead rats, dogs . . .

Napoleon Street, rotten, toylike, crazy and filthy, flogged with harsh weather . . . His mother did the wash, and mourned. His brother Shura with staring disingenuous eyes was plotting to master the world, to become a millionaire. His brother Willie struggled with asthmatic fits. Trying to breathe he gripped the table and rose on his toes like a cock about to crow.

It was a time and place far removed from McDonald's, waterbeds and colored TV.

Herzog's family—and, no doubt, Bellow's, also—had to be hardened to survive; as hardened as those pioneers who with axe and ox cart braved the wilderness of the early West. What helped the Herzogs to survive was the generous support that members of the family gave to one another; indeed, a rich family feeling suffuses the whole of Bellow's fiction. Joseph of *Dangling Man* is close to his brother Amos; Asa Leventhal looks after his brother's family; Augie March and Moses Herzog are devoted to their brothers, and Dr. Gruner is paternally concerned about your welfare, Sammler.

Looking back at his Montreal past, Herzog is filled with affection and admiration for his parents and for others he knew there—Jews from the East European *shtetl* world, *kleine mentshelakh* with good hearts, open hands and old-fashioned dignity. People with a 'wider range of human feelings than he had ever again been able to find.' 'Whom did I ever love as I loved them?' he asks himself. 'What was wrong with Napoleon Street?

... All he ever wanted was there.' The significance of this passage to our discussion cannot be emphasized enough. 'All he ever wanted was there' among a people who were firmly attached to the ground of common life; they took their daily bearings from it; they believed that the obligations of ordinary existence tested the strength of a man's spiritual capacity.

Valuing his immigrant family past the way he does, Herzog is not impressed by learned banter unconnected to the everyday world. Certainly he is not impressed when Shapiro, a scholar acquaintance of his, reels off references to Tikhon, Zolotarev, Dostoevsky, Herzen, and Kropotkin. For Herzog remembers that Shapiro's father peddled apples for a living and that there was 'more of the truth of life in those spotted apples than in all the learned references.' So when Shapiro begins to dwell on the intellectual canned goods of the Wasteland shtick, the cant and rant of specialists in Alienation, Herzog, to his credit, says: 'We are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice—too deep, too great, Shapiro . . . A merely aesthetic critique of modern history! After the wars and mass killings! You are too intelligent for this. You inherited rich blood. Your father peddled apples.' In Herzog's eyes, intellectuals like Shapiro are Separatists; they amuse themselves with grandly rarefied syntheses while wilfully separating themselves from the interests and needs of the everyday world; they do not feel that the butcher or baker or candlestick maker are fit companions for the genuine scholar. Hence Herzog's quip: 'What this country needs is a good five-cent synthesis.'

Clearly, Bellow is pleased to have inherited 'rich blood.' He said as much in an interview for the *Chicago Review* in 1972 by acknowledging that much of the power of his literary imagination 'comes from the fact that in a most susceptible time of my life I was wholly Jewish. That's a gift, a piece of good fortune with which one doesn't quarrel.'"

"And I won't quarrel with your emphasis, professor, on the relationship between the immigrant family background and the moral values implicit in Bellow's writing. There is, as you point out, a strong sense of family responsibility in the novels, especially *The Adventures of Augie March* and *Herzog*. The Bellovian hero invariably comes to realize that a man should meet his obligations to others, even if it means restraining or even denying his private desires. The key word here is obligations, not narcissistic self-gratification (whatever makes you feel good is good). Henderson states this view succinctly: 'I had a voice that said, I want! I want! I? It should have told me *she* wants, *he* wants, *they* want.'"

"Yes, I would agree with you, Sammler, that Bellow seems to be saying that not only are we able to know what our individual responsibilities are, but we are enjoined to act on this knowledge. Which brings us to the last of the three tenets that I previously proposed for consideration. How should a good man live? By meeting the terms of the contract—a Bellovian code phrase for the moral imperative that we meet our obliga-

tions to ourselves and to others; being exactly human means being accountable. This is what you, Sammler, admired in your friend, Dr. Gruner, a dependable man who reached out to others and did 'what was required of him,' who believed 'that it is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly that makes saints and heroes.'

"Professor, the overall sense I get from listening to you is that Bellow's novels may be seen as books of moral instruction."

"Yes, Sammler, and this is how I would sum up the central direction of the novels: the hero is involved in a process of developing a self-awareness refined enough so that he can clearly comprehend and responsibly execute the terms of the contract. The values he comes to place upon *mentshlekhhkayt*, accepting the mixture of things within one's self, and celebrating the experiences of ordinary life are values that men can still guide themselves by and remain human."

"Tell me, professor, if you were required to state the essence of Bellow's moral imagination while standing on one foot, what single passage from his entire body of writing would you choose?"

I pondered the question for a while and then cited the ending of Bellow's essay, "The Writer as Moralist:"

[E]ither we want life to continue or we do not. If we don't want to continue, why write books? The wish for death is powerful and silent. It respects actions; it has no need of words.

But if we answer yes, we do want it to continue, we are liable to be asked how. In what form shall life be justified? That is the essence of the moral question. We call a writer moral to the degree that his imagination indicates to us how we may answer naturally, without strained arguments, with a spontaneous, mysterious proof that has no need to argue with despair.

"Will that do, Sammler?"

"Yes, thank you. Say, professor, this has been a very long class. Haven't we gone overtime?"

"One last question, Sammler. Where do you think Bellow will go from here? Where will his imagination take him?"

"My dear fellow, there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. So, until next time, goodbye and good luck."

He began to fade, to dissolve into the darkness, as he had at the conclusion of previous conversations.

"Wait a minute, won't you?" I called after him.

His response was barely audible. "My friend, I beg you. Enough. *Genug schoin!* This class is over. Over!"

Tradition and Modernity in the German Ghetto Novel

LOTHAR KAHN

THE TERM "GHETTO NOVEL" WAS APPLIED to a large number of fictional works that were written in the German language and made up a genre that was immensely popular between 1850 and 1880. In general, the ghetto tale depicts the lives of the residents of so-called *Judengassen*, the Jewish streets of cities and villages. The reader is not always informed as to when the events transpired and the line between recent history and the present seems often very thin. In fact, the Jewish historical novel, as it also evolved at this time, bears a strong thematic kinship to the ghetto tale and is distinguishable from it primarily because the author, often a rabbi, earnestly seeks to give instruction about significant periods of the Jewish past, e.g., the England of Richard the Lion-Hearted, the final days of Spanish Jewry, the Sultanships that were hostile to Near Eastern Jews and the Austria of the liberal Joseph II.

Among the dominant concerns in both types of fiction were: 1) the choice of a profession, i.e., getting away from door-to-door peddling and returning to manual occupations and the tilling of the soil; 2) the over-protective mother who must no longer hinder her son in his desire to use his body and hands and incur normal risks; 3) the young Jew's attitude toward military service, usually negative; 4) the temptations by lovely Christian maidens beckoning young Jews to the marriage bed; 5) the ever-present yearning for the Holy Land; 6) the perils of conversion; 7) ways of forestalling anti-Semitism or combating it where it already existed; and 8) the issues of tradition vs. modernity.

Among the favorite characters of the ghetto or historical tale are the brave Jew, usually from a freer country, who can teach physical courage to other Jews who look upon this as an alien characteristic; the *Schlemihl* in search of a suitable wife, or the less-than-well-endowed female fearing inspection by a prospective husband; the *Randar*, i.e., the wealthy Jewish innkeeper and estate leaseowner who knows the village secrets and has some power over the *goyim*; the rich Jew who is taught a lesson that man does not live by bread alone; the blind man or woman who is endowed with special vision; and, of course, the matchmaker, the stern rabbi (he is rarely lovable), and the Jewish clerk who serves as intermediary between Jews and the gentile authorities and who, for a consideration, will falsify papers that will keep the young Jew from having to fight for a hostile government. The *Beschau*—the inspection of the intended bride—and the

customs surrounding induction into military service—or, more often, avoiding it—are among the commonest scenes in this type of story.

The first major practitioner of ghetto fiction in German was the Bohemian, Leopold Kompert (1822–1886); the last important writer of the genre was the Galicia-born Karl Emil Franzos (1848–1904). Between them there were dozens, well known in their time, and possessing varying degrees of talent.¹ Most of these were closer to the tradition of Kompert than of Franzos, for between these two there was a wide gap in their view of ghetto life. Kompert depicted it in a generally realistic vein, though there are occasional sentimental or romantic overtones; Franzos saw the Ruthenian Jewish ways of his young years only in the harshest naturalistic terms with few either charming or redemptive features. Kompert was influenced by the poetry of Jewish life; Franzos perceived little poetry—except perhaps in his final ghetto novel—and condemned the existing ways as backward, anti-rational and superstitious and all of Eastern Galicia as part of “Half-Asia,” which is also the title of one of his earliest tales. These differences between the authors were due, in part, to genuine differences in their temperaments, but, also, to sharp dissimilarities in the Bohemian and Ruthenian ghettos.

Other writers dealt with *Judengassen* in the small towns and village of Germany, or of the *Judenviertel* of Vienna, Prague or other cities, but in these pages there will simply be a concentration on the themes that interested them, especially as exemplified in the work of Kompert and Franzos.²

Born in 1822, Kompert had no more serious dilemma than that confronting most sensitive young Jewish intellectuals: how to overcome the disapproval of a stern, successful businessman-father who looked upon commerce as the sole proper domain for a Jew. His mother, as so often, leaned toward poetry and verbal expression and fought for the secondary education which her husband would have denied his son.

1. Among the major writers of ghetto tales were Aaron Bernstein (1812–1884) (uncle of the noted Socialist revisionist Eduard Bernstein) whose *Vogele the Maggid* and *Mendel Gibbor* belong to the finest examples of the genre; Hermann Schiff, some of whose work also appeared before Kompert's; the Prague-born Michael Klapp (1834–1888) with his *Komische Geschichten aus dem jüdischen Volksleben* or Eduard Kulke (1831–1897) with his *Geschichten*. Alexander Weil, Heine's friend, published stories of Alsatian Jewish life and, somewhat later, Leo Herzberg-Frankel published a collection of stories called *Polnische Juden*. Representative authors of early historical tales are Ludwig Philippson (1811–1889), Meyer Lehmann (birth date unknown, died in 1890) and Salomon Kohn (1825–1904). It is worth repeating that often the line dividing the two genres was so thin as to be virtually undistinguishable.

2. The major works of Leopold Kompert were collected in *Leopold Komperts Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig: 1906), 10 vols. *Die Kinder des Randar* is found in v. 1; “Trenderl” and “Eine Verlorene” in v. 2.; “Am Pflug” (1855) in v. 3 and “Zwischen Ruinen” (1875) in v. 6. The exact dates of *Die Kinder des Randar* and “Trenderl” may be difficult to obtain, but they were certainly written between 1847 and 1854.

The dates of the main works of K.E. Franzos are: *Aus Halbasien*, 1876–1878 and another double volume in 1888; *Juden von Barnow*, 1877; *Moschko von Parma*, 1880; *Judith Trachtenberg*, 1890 and *Der Pojaz* (posthumously), 1905. *The Jews of Barnow* was published in an English translation by Appleton in 1883.

Young Kompert was studying at a Piarist Gymnasium when his father lost his business and his money and, henceforth, poverty was to stalk the once golden boy. He walked from Bohemia to Hungary and, later, from Budapest to Vienna. His literary efforts commenced early and, though he was published, starvation was still the rule. In later life, he supported himself partially by writing, by tutoring and by helping in Viennese Jewish educational and communal life. He died in 1886.

In addition to his mother, his maternal grandfather also influenced the youngster, who later memorialized him in a tale in which a rabbi, as his grandfather had been in real life, appeared in town in a beggar's garb, wanting to test the charity and spiritual quality of the community that he was to instruct. The beggar-rabbi was invited into the home of a gentle merchant, himself not affluent. During dinner he regaled the guests with his learning and earned the admiration and love of his host's daughter (who, later, in real life, was Kompert's grandmother). Perhaps it is significant that on the day following his grandfather's death, Kompert sat down to write this, his first story, "*Von meinem Grossvater.*"

Of his numerous works, *Die Kinder des Randars* (The Randar's Children) is one of his earliest, best and most representative. Reb Schmul, the *Randar*, maintains excellent relations, not only with the Count whose lands he administers, but also with the peasants. He thinks nothing of walking among them wearing *t'fillin* and chanting from the *siddur*. (Relations with the peasants is a recurring theme in Kompert's fiction.) The peasants do not understand his prayer, but do realize that he is praying. They are less sympathetic when, after they have run up a drinking bill, he refuses to extend further credit. Then they turn angry and remember that he is a Jew. This "Rothschild of the village" is a jovial, pleasant man, an observant Jew, but within moderation, who has married a woman far more intelligent than he. When the *Randar* is reluctant to send the hero, Moschele, to secondary school, she enlists the help of the powerful Count who, from a respectful distance, has always shown her his love and respect. Schmul can refuse her, but not the Count.

To the village come *schnorrers* and, as custom requires, all stop at the house of the rich Schmul. One of them, Reb Mendel, fires young Mosche's imagination with tales of rebuilding Jerusalem and of Jews returning to the land which they had left centuries ago. When Mendel sets out for the Holy Land, Mosche accompanies him for a few miles but realizes that he is not ready for so long a journey; he must settle for the tiny vessel of holy earth which Mendel brings back to him many years later.

Hannele, the *Randar's* daughter, falls in love with Honza, a peasant's son who is Moschele's competitor in school, some-time friend and, later, as a priest, his bitter enemy. When Honza's father, who is denied credit for his drinks, burns down the barn, the *Randar* has him imprisoned. Vindictively, the priest seeks Hannele's conversion to the one true faith. Mosche, now called Moritz and a physician, goes to the priest's house and coura-

geously rescues his sister from the clutches of the proselytizer.

Seeing Honza become a Bohemian nationalist, Mosche-Moritz struggles with the dilemma of Jewish identity. Can Jews merge with the host peoples and retain their identity? Moritz's answer is inconclusive, as is, presumably, the author's. Moritz is also disillusioned with his one-time plan to befriend the peasants. After the Honza incident, he is prone to agree with his father that the peasants may be pleasant, congenial, Jew-friendly most of the time, but that when they are crossed they have the power to ruin the Jew. On the other hand, the adult Moritz has doubts that his father's serving alcohol to primitive peasants is an honorable activity. The peasants can be trusted up to a point, but the clergy cannot, for they are apt to stir up the peasants whenever the whim strikes them.

Throughout his life, Kompert was interested in education. Repeatedly he marvels at the Jewish pattern in which the child is led early to the holy sources, matures through knowledge of them, and, unlike the Catholic child, is allowed free rein in his readings. (See Franzos, below, for the reverse viewpoint.) He admires the achievements by Jews who attend the secondary schools that are run by Catholic priests. But Salme, Mosche's landlord and father-substitute while at the Gymnasium, fulminates against the young Jews who study with Piarists and others like them. Young Jews, he feels, should hurl their Latin books into the fire, for they are partly responsible for the assimilationist tendencies within learned groups. Kompert-Mosche understands Salme's fears, but maintains that Jewish particularity should not be stressed, that Jews are human beings and cannot neglect what they have in common with their Christian brethren. The polarity of particularism-universalism, which runs throughout Kompert's tales, is usually resolved in favor of the latter.

Already among the *Randar's* children, the occupational question looms large. The same Reb Salme maintains that a Jew cannot be a mason or carpenter. Can you imagine a Jew working on the tower of some church or edifice and endangering his life? He cannot abide the thought of a Jewish wife who would eat bread earned by her husband in this abominable manner. Moschele thinks that Salme is both right and wrong. Then, across the street, he sees a Jewish butcher plying his trade. If a Jew cannot be a mason or carpenter, he asks, why can he become a butcher? Isn't blood worse than cement or wood? Salme can only concede that Moschele is smart. And, of course, he adds, man must eat. To which Moschele replies that man must also live in a house built by masons and carpenters. Throughout the stories, Kompert dwells on one of the dominant motifs of the ghetto-novelist: traditional Jewish occupations must be broadened. What others can do, Jews can do also.

Honza's Bohemian nationalism and the *schnorrer* Mendel's Holy Land stories lead Moschele to dream about the restoration of Jerusalem. But he cannot imagine a land where only Jews live. How should a new Judea be ruled? By an anointed king, by a republican leader? Would Jews become

masons and carpenters or continue to resist? Would one import Christian workers to build houses and government buildings? Would Jews cultivate the land, be willing to learn? And if Jews were peasants once more, like those in his village, would they also take to drink?

In a longer, almost novel-size tale, "*Am Pflug*" (Ploughing), a Jewish family leaves the city and purchases a large farm, but has to learn a whole new way of life. When they arrive in the village, a vast row of fires greets them and they assume it is a warning to leave again. But it is the opposite: a gesture of welcome. Not all goes well for the family, but they do achieve a robust physical health which they had not had. Yes, and a Christian maiden intrudes and separates two brothers.

"*Trenderl*" is about a Jewish boy who wishes to work with his hands, but his mother cannot imagine that one who has issued from her womb can climb the tower of St. Stephan's Cathedral to affix an object. Even Trenderl hesitates, until his Christian friend, ominously called Nazi, deliberately flings "Just a Jew" at him, whereupon he completes the job. Influenced as he was by Rousseau, Kompert looks upon natural life as the real one, while a life wholly given to perusing holy books is contrary to nature. The didactic streak in him leads to the repeated observation that a healthy, more natural, body-related occupation would in no way represent a diminution of Jewishness. In a restored balance between body and mind lies the Jewish hope for psychological normalcy, self-respect and, in larger measure, the respect of others.

Though in later years Kompert became more broadly universalist, less specifically and narrowly Jewish, he remained very sensitive to anti-Jewish discrimination of all kinds. In "*Judith die Zweite*," he objects that a whole community should be held accountable for the alleged crime of one. In "*Ohne Bewilligung*" (Without Approval), he refers compassionately to Jaikew Lederer who was not a *Familiant* (i.e., a Jew officially permitted to marry) and was living with a woman to whom he was married only in the eyes of God. In "*Der Hausierer*" (The Peddler), he deals with degrading activities, such as peddling, which disturb him greatly. In his later works, too, Kompert is not certain about the strictures against intermarriage, especially where there is mutual love and when the Christian partner is a worthy human being who is able to withstand the entreaties of priests. In "Between Ruins," he approves patently of the Jewish hero who, after an unsuccessful marriage with a Jewess who had died, weds a Christian girl who had been devoted both to the wife and their handicapped, mute child, and who has put her ugly priest in his place. Kompert does not advocate intermarriage, but does not disapprove as he once did—and he admits its possibility under a civil arrangement. He sympathizes, in "*Der Dorfgeher*," with the young physician who gives up his engagement to Klara, in order not to hurt his parents. "*Eine Verlorene*" (A Lost Woman) is, in part, a plea for Jewish openness toward others and a more humane, modern interpretation of old practices. The lost woman of the story is a

Jewess who has been baptized, has married a peasant, borne him children, and is totally rejected by her brother—though not by her mother, who prays only for a conciliation between her children. Yet, on the whole, the author advocates respect for tradition and loyalty to it.

Kompert has created some truly beautiful characters, respectful of old, proven ways, but not fearful of reinterpreting them, when needed, in favor of what is natural and human. The blind old Veile of “Between Ruins” observes the spirit and letter of the laws and blessings, but she will not tolerate false piety, ethical exclusiveness or moral narrowness. In “The Princess,” the Jewish peasant, Reb Feivel, and his wife teach a lesson of dignity to the “Princess,” the spoiled daughter of the rich widow, Hannele Ehrendfeld. Their simplicity is contrasted with the pretentiousness of the French language tutor, Julius Arnsteiner, who appears in several tales as a symbol of the sham and false in Jewish life.

It is possible that, in his last years in Vienna, Kompert may have met Theodor Herzl, then prominent in Viennese intellectual life. Their views of Jewish life coincided in many respects, though Kompert was more knowledgeable of it and, basically, more sympathetic to it. But in wanting a healthier, more natural Jew, who need not fear anti-Semitism and would personally represent a vigorous response to it, they were of one mind. And, probably, Kompert would have accepted the notion that the Jews in a land of their own could attain to greater physical and natural health and normalcy than they could elsewhere. But, though, to a degree, he wanted the restoration of Jerusalem as part of a Messianic dream, it was to a cultural-religious, rather than a nationally oriented, Jerusalem that he aspired. While waiting for that far-off day, he settled for more natural lives in the admittedly hostile environment of Central Europe.

Like Berthold Auerbach, the Jewish chronicler of German village life, Kompert spoke softly, sought to appeal to reason and sentiment, and protested the infamies against Jews and other minority groups in the Hapsburg Empire. Like other Jewish writers eager to explain the good in Jews, he disliked Heine, who reflected negatively on them. Temperamentally, too, Kompert was of a soft and generous nature and would not engage in feuds and combats.

Karl Emil Franzos, who owed examples of the ghetto novel to Kompert, claimed that ghetto life in his predecessor's depiction was far brighter than it was in reality. He attributed this discrepancy less to Kompert's distorted vision than to his personality. Kompert could not condemn; evil caused him pain. This, of course, is an exaggeration, as all is not rosy in Kompert's *Judengassen*; violence does occur and conflict is rampant. But where Kompert could not get himself to vivify the darker features of the ghetto, Franzos could. In a way, he became its Zola, depicting it as he saw it, and what he saw was a conglomerate of narrowness, superstition, irrationalism and cultural backwardness that was entirely alien to the superior West and, especially, to the superior German culture.

Hasidic and Zionist Jews have been especially merciless in their denunciation of Franzos' portraits. Rationalist and liberal Jews, by contrast, have recognized a certain truth in them and have applauded him as a man of progress and broadly humane aspirations. Franzos did not limit himself to relating the prejudices, foibles, eccentricities and regressions in Galician life. Just as severely, he exposed the far more dangerous prejudices of Poles, Rumanians, Hungarians and Ruthenians. If Jews bear the brunt, it is because he knew them best and was more deeply involved with their destiny. For them, he was insistent on more incisive change. He lumped together as "Half/Asians" all of the backward peoples whom he had known in his youth. In later years, he may have faintly suspected that he had overrated Western and German values, as well as modernism and rationalist-scientific currents in general, but with his optimism that was born out of the scientific thought of his times, he was truly a man of the 19th century. It was only in his last novel, *Der Pojaz* (The Practical Joker), begun in 1872 and published posthumously in 1905, that Franzos' criticism mellows. In it he is as intolerant as ever of intolerance, whether the rabbi's or the priest's, the Jew's or Ruthenian's, but he has begun to discern some virtue in Hasidism.

Franzos was born in 1848, when the Poles were rising against individual Germans in Podolia. His father was a physician in the Austrian Imperial Service and, as a pro-German, was especially subject to attack. As a precaution he sent his wife to an isolated forester's house across the border where she gave birth, but once the danger was passed, she returned with her infant to Czortkow, which Franzos was to immortalize as Barnow. Throughout his early life, the culture conflicts of Eastern Galicia baffled the boy, though later he put them artistically to good use. His father wanted him to know who he was. "You are, by nationality, not a Pole, a Ruthenian or a Jew. You are a German. Your religion—you are a Jew." For character emulation, Dr. Franzos made Karl read Mendelssohn; for philosophy, *Nathan the Wise*. For politics he raised him on the ideals of Börne, for poetry on Heine, for German-Jewish thought on the assimilationism of Friedlander. Later, Karl realized that his father, who died when the boy was ten, had raised him for a life in the far West.

Hebrew and religious instruction, imparted, as so often, by an incompetent, did not take hold. He received some public education from the Dominicans, but he felt equally separated from Christian and Jewish youngsters by faith and culture. Yet he felt that he was a Jew. Then, in Czernowitz, he consciously sought out Hasidim, though the contact merely served to alienate him temporarily from Judaism. He studied law in German-speaking Austria, where he encountered anti-Semitism professionally and even in love. The Christian girl he was infatuated with preferred the cross to him and, in an early story, he mocked her attitude toward Jews. All in all, he was then, as he admits, an improbable candidate to be a portrayer of Jewish life.

When Judaism began to exact sacrifices from him, i.e., girl, job opportunities, advancement, he felt a closer bond to it than ever before. During a year at Graz, Austria, he did not see a single Jew, creating a greater awareness of the distant ghetto that he now missed. Denied a judgeship for which he was qualified, he turned to journalism and drama. He worked for the *Neue Freie Presse*, which sent him to the outermost borders of the Austrian Empire, to what he was to call Half-Asia. In 1887, he moved to Berlin, where he edited a journal. His major works of Jewish interest were *The Jews of Barnow* (1877), *Moschko of Parma* (1880), *Judith Trachtenberg* (1890), and *Der Pojaz*, already mentioned.

A persistent theme of Franzos' Jewish fiction is the manner in which rabbis and elders stifle the natural impulses in youngsters. They look down upon a boy who is less gifted Talmudically than another, or one who leans toward physical pursuits (like Moschko, who becomes a blacksmith). At the other end of the spectrum, they are also repressive of the intellectually curious child for whom traditional Jewish learning is too confining. Thus, Franzos presents several talented youngsters who give up precious possessions to bribe a guard or librarian in order to gain access to a copy of Schiller, Lessing, Shakespeare or other forbidden books, and when Sender Glatteis, the Pojaz, is discovered reading such gentile works, he is severely punished and eventually dies of the consequences of the repression. Social disapproval of those who have the misfortune to fall in love with a non-Jew is even more stringent. Moschko's life is ruined by it in part, while Judith Trachtenberg's is entirely destroyed. Such young people suffer rejection by parents and community alike.

Jewish education as depicted in these novels is unhealthy in its narrowness, for it chokes both individuality and all natural instincts. It postulates values that are suitable only for lazy men who justify their not working productively by staying glued to dusty tomes and engaging in dubious arguments. It neglects totally the physical development of the young and confines the emotions to a narrow range of do's and don'ts.

In *Moschko of Parma*, Moschko, the son of a hapless *shammes*, is inept at learning the Hebrew letters, but compensates for his inadequacy with physical vigor and strength. Unlike most other Jewish children, he does not run when he is insulted or attacked. "I don't run like the others when they see a Christian child," he says, "maybe I am like a Christian child." He broods a great deal: what is to become of him, a Jew and yet so much like *goyim* in some ways. To the ghetto's horror, he resolves to apprentice himself to the village blacksmith, even if he is to be the first Jew so employed. He swings his tools vigorously and proves that a Jew can be as good a smith as can a *goy*. His goal is to take in other Jewish apprentices, should he ever qualify as a master. Since Moschko keeps the commandments, his fellow Jews conclude that perhaps no harm has been done.

But, in time, Moschko decides that he is first a human being and only

secondly a Jew, as his fellow-apprentice is first a human and secondly a Christian. He has trouble understanding why God should even permit different religions and though he accepts the idea that a Jew should not marry a non-Jewish girl, he can never think of a completely satisfactory reason why. At the *brith* of a son to his brother Mendele, Moschko is pained by the respect given to this pale, arrogant man who makes a profession out of piety. And how the Jews despise him, Moschko, who works from dawn to dusk!

Can it please God . . . that a man loaf? And displease him that I work? Our wise men say it is so, but maybe they don't understand what God ordered written as the Law. And if they understand it, maybe the Law is wrong. . . .

If the Jews are God's people, why are they despised? That very day the Polish Baron Starsky had spat on Jews and used his whip on their backs. Moschko would have pulled him from his horse and thrashed him, but though he knows that the masterblacksmith respects him, he also knows that his successor thinks it sinful to have an infidel in his smithy. Moschko's fellow-worker, Havrilo, is at first displeased with the presence of a Jew, but, after some solid brawling, the two accept each other. Franzos gives us a comic picture of the religious primitivism in both as they spout their transmitted prejudices and popular notions. After a lengthy and amusing debate, they conclude that neither religion practices what it preaches and perhaps the whole thing is not worth fighting over.

With no powerful Jews to protect him, Moschko is a natural for the conscription which all Austrian subjects sought to escape, and none more than the Jews. Germans left the region; Ruthenians cut off their toes; Jews used the purse, the ruse, or feigned a rapid heart beat before the examining physician. In at least three novels, Franzos tells us with amused understanding of the devices that were employed by Jews in their attempts to evade a life which conflicted with their religious obligations, threatened their centuries-old non-military traditions, and involved fighting for a country that was not really theirs. Luise Wollenblut, the scribe, is a counselor to Jews who are called for military service. He is a master at helping them, provided that the funds are adequate.

Since Moschko cannot pay, he is conscripted, but he is also the Jew most likely to survive. After injuries suffered in Parma, Italy, he finally returns to Barnow where he is still a Jew in the eyes of the Christians and their government, but for the Jews he is no longer one. Broken in body and spirit, a victim of national conflicts and stupidities, he has the pleasure of seeing his illegitimate son, whom Havrilo's sister had borne to him years ago and of whose existence he had known nothing. Only in Moschko's final days do father and son come close. He concludes that though once he had thought it a misfortune to be born a Jew, it is neither a misfortune nor a fortune, it is merely a destiny like any other.

Among Franzos' other targets in the ghetto novels are the fearful attitude toward secular learning, the treatment of love and women, the absurdity of Talmudic hairsplitting, and the power of Hasidic rabbis.

He cannot accept the view that the outside world should not exist for Jews and that the only learning deemed acceptable should be that of Hebrew antiquity, especially as misinterpreted by ill-educated rabbis, victims of their own inadequate training. The prankster, Sender Glatteis, has a deep thirst for the German language as a means of leading him toward acting, his secretly chosen profession, but he can learn it only on the sly and must risk severe penalties. When his clandestine study in a monastery library is discovered—he catches a permanent lung disease in its stark, cold chambers—the rabbi puts a ban on him and he is spared disgrace only when he hemorrhages, showing the first symptoms of his impending death. In a short story, "Schiller in Barnow," Franzos relates the impact of a copy of a Schiller play on the denizens of Half-Asia. In "The Shylock of Barnow," old Moses Freudenthal (the same characters recur in different stories) had allowed his brother-in-law to raise a daughter in "enlightened" fashion. When she runs off with an officer, Moses blames her defection on the dangerous education that she had received. (This is also the theme of *Judith Trachtenberg*.)

Franzos is aghast also at the ways in which marriages are contracted—for business purposes or for social respectability—with the man usually holding the upper hand. The citizens of Barnow know nothing about love except that Christians often fall in love, but what use has a Jew for such Christian emotions and practices? One of the more enlightened characters ventures the hypothesis that the rejection of love is more the denial and repudiation of feeling among Jews than any sense of superiority vis à vis Jewish or non-Jewish marriage partners.

Franzos' *Marshallik* and marriage broker, Itzig Turkischgeld, is one of his more consistently pleasant characters. Though Itzig will embellish the moral and physical assets of a marriage prospect, he withholds sales pressure when he suspects an aversion for "the most wonderful of catches." Parents, by contrast, more often are merely concerned about their children dutifully and properly appearing under the *huppah*. Sender Glatteis has to employ every ruse to escape the marriage web that is being spun for him, and, eventually, Itzig comes to his rescue. Though his business may rest on false assumptions, he personally, will not contribute to marital unhappiness. Franzos is totally unsympathetic to rabbis who pressure youngsters into marriage, and he shows far more respect for the wise Jew Silberstein of "Chane" who, despite his love for his wife, frees her from the marriage bond when she falls in love, against her will, with a Christian nobleman who honorably reciprocates her affection.

The treatment of women receives ample attention. A heroine asks, "Is a wife like any other property? . . . Is she no more than other chattel, an ornament or a house? Has she not a will like every other human being?"

He attributes this low estate of women less to Jewish tradition than to being a by-product of all Half-Asian cultures, most of whom behave toward their women much less generously than do Jews. At least Jews treat their daughters and women with benign domination, through playful, though condescending, kindness.

Rabbis generally fare poorly, but far better than do priests. Rabbi Manasse of Barnow may order Moses Veilchenblut to marry a woman who is ten years his senior as well as hunchbacked, yet, despite this and other "misdeeds," he is not evil, but merely the victim of a tradition that has become ossified. Though some wonder rabbis are charlatans, nearly all priests are put into the category of exploiters and bigots.

Franzos treats the "Misnagdim" more kindly than he does Hasidim, though both confuse profound religiosity with senseless acts of devotion. He rejects Kabbalah outright; he defends the Talmud as an elucidation of Torah, though, at times, it degenerates into absurd argument. Why should former friends become enemies over whether an egg is unkosher if a blood spot is on one side rather than on another?

Yet, especially in the later years, Franzos perceived warmth and beauty in Barnow. In a manner reminiscent of Heine, he depicts with warmth and charm the preparations for the Sabbath and the holidays. He admires the adoration of the one God and the poetry of the Song of Songs, with its hymn of love and its beautiful tribute to womanhood. Few of his characters ever consider Christianity as an alternative to their religion. To the extent to which he was didactic, he would settle for reforms within Judaism, never an abandonment of it.

To some small degree, the following passage from Franzos, which sums up his thinking, also reflects that of Kompert and other ghetto and historical novelists:

What a peculiar history the Jews have had: Their strong religion, founded on a rock, was once a protection and saved them from the axes and clubs of their enemies. They would have been destroyed without that protection, for the blows aimed at them were heavy and hard to parry; and for that very reason, they clung to it the more tenaciously, until, at last, instead of enlightening their hearts, they made of it a bandage for their eyes. At one time they were not to be pitied even for this, for all the world went about with eyes bandaged. But now when the light of day is shining in the West and even dawn has broken in the East, Jews have not raised the bandage one inch. I do not want them to do it too quickly, nor do I want them to throw away their religion; I only want them to open their eyes to the light shining ever more brightly about them.

Bellow's Jerusalem: The Road Not Taken

IRVING S. SAPOSNIK

I Am an American-Chicago born . . .

UNLIKE NEW YORK—THAT HELL OF A TOWN—Chicago has for long been Bellow's Jerusalem, for it is on the shores of Lake Michigan, amid the clamor of urban renewal, that his latter-day prophets, his Columbuses of the near-at-hand have found the necessary means to renew themselves. Augie's declaration of legitimacy with Chicago as its stamp of approval is echoed by Moses Herzog and Charley Citrine, who prove themselves by proving that they can read the writing on Chicago's walls. New York, in contrast, as it appears in *The Victim*, *Seize the Day*, and *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, "has always managed to raise Bellow's hackles, to bring out that carping, uncharitable side of his nature usually hidden behind comic masks."¹ In *Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow's most recent work of fiction, New York is the literal and figurative graveyard of Von Humboldt Fleisher who succumbs to its urban frenzy, while Chicago allows Charley Citrine to become a connoisseur, even though it be of the near nothing.

The mystique of Chicago appears still intact in *To Jerusalem and Back*, but its spires have become somewhat obscured; fog has descended at least temporarily over the city, and most of its citizens have been grounded. Rather than appear as an urban proving ground, it is here but another American city, replete with row houses, ersatz culture, and fading elegance, a would-be land of enchantment which pretends to be Alice's Wonderland but which, instead, resembles "the doughboy's no-man's-land" (p. 188).² Chicago's loss is seemingly Jerusalem's gain, for here, as in no other of Bellow's books, and in few books by any Jewish-American writer, the literal as opposed to the literary Jerusalem becomes a central location, the geo-political center of a modern nation-state, which at once resembles the Biblical Jerusalem and yet differs from the idealized construction as much as New York does from Chicago. And yet, although the glow of Chicago may dim somewhat in comparison to the earthly Jerusalem, it is but a temporary eclipse. While Jerusalem may intrude for a time upon Chicago's eminence, it is not a suitable replacement; while

1. Sanford Pinsker, "Sustaining Community of 'Reality Instructor': The City in Saul Bellow's Later Fiction," *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, III, 1 (Spring, 1977): 25-30.

2. All references to *To Jerusalem and Back* are to the Avon edition (New York, 1977).

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Bellow may choose to visit Jerusalem, he likewise chooses to return to Chicago, "this huge, filthy, brilliant, and mean city," to which he is driven "like the Ancient Mariner driven towards the Pole" (p. 208).

Chicago is Bellow's lodestar, as much so here as it has been in the previous books, and he returns to its shores despite its imperfections for it is the home that Jerusalem can never be. Indeed, Bellow makes no secret of his intentions; the title alone suggests the direction that he has chosen. Although very much "a personal account," *To Jerusalem and Back* may likewise be read as a declaration of emergent Jewish consciousness by a Jewish-American writer who recognizes and testifies to the centrality of Israel for those American Jews whose home is likely to remain in exile rather than in the traditional homeland. No doubt it is this tacit admission that has disturbed many readers, particularly in Israel,³ and, yet, such a statement, upsetting though it may be, forces a recognition which both Israelis and Americans would do well to confront. While Bellow may be among the few Jewish "masters of American culture" to acknowledge openly his identification with Israel, as Edward Grossman suggests,⁴ he does not hesitate to admit that his identification can at best be only spiritual, that, in fact, the real Israel is ultimately less significant and seemingly less vital than what he calls the mental Israel.

This may be one reason why the earthly Jerusalem here pales in comparison to the multiple roles that Chicago plays in Bellow's fiction. It is all the difference, perhaps, between being present as a visitor and being ever-present as a permanent resident. Bellow does not know Jerusalem as he knows Chicago (he is constantly being guided around the city), and while he may marvel as he stands among its ancient tombs that "Jeremiah passed this way," he is as out of place as Augie was in the wilds of Mexico or Eugene Henderson amid the jungles of Africa. Like Augie and Henderson, Bellow returns home after his spiritual journey, like theirs a journey into an actual geographic location whose actuality is seemingly less significant than its symbolic value. Bellow's Jerusalem, like his Africa, is a place of spiritual renascence, for it remains the center of Western regeneration, but its centrality is perhaps more that of a shrine than of a real city. While Bellow acknowledges Jerusalem's modernity, it is the ideal construction that remains paramount, for he knows full well that the retention of that ideal is essential both for him and for his readers.

3. Israeli reactions have been particularly caustic, largely due to a misunderstanding of Bellow's position. A review in *The Jerusalem Post*, for example, (International Edition, Tuesday, November 16, 1976, p. 13), faults Bellow for being a Jewish American and, therefore, more a part of American history. It is difficult, however, to blame Bellow for having grown up American when, indeed, that is the very condition that he confirms in so many of his writings. Israelis would do better to recognize the book for what it attempts to be, rather than to deny its significance because it may not conform to subjective rules of certification.

4. Edward Grossman, "Unsentimental Journey," *Commentary*, LVII (November, 1976): 80-84.

For most of Bellow's readers have undoubtedly chosen, like him, to purchase a round-trip ticket to Jerusalem and, thus, their return, like his, is guaranteed even before the journey begins. This circular structure is not only necessary to an understanding of *To Jerusalem and Back*, but is often a characteristic feature of Bellow's fiction, particularly *Herzog* and *Henderson*. Indeed, both Steven David Lavine and Teddy Kollek are correct when they claim, for different reasons, that the book can best be understood when compared to other Bellow novels.⁵ Not only is the circular structure apparent from the title itself, but several other familiar fictional techniques provide structural support. The people of the book, for example, resemble fictional characters more than they do the politicians, government leaders, and academicians that they actually are; each in his individual way (there are few women present) represents an identifiable position for each is representative in much the same way that Herzog's imagined correspondents are representative, actual historical person co-opted to serve fictional needs. Furthermore, the global dialectic which is such a significant part of the book's construction, the division between Israel and America, and between Russia and America, is a division which resembles those necessary divisions in Bellow's fiction which are essential to his polemic.

Divisions are the very stuff of Bellow's fiction: between family members (husband and wife, brother and brother), between past and present, between symbolic geographical locations. Often the fiction develops toward a resolution of those differences and reconciliation is strengthened by a renewed fraternal bond. (Even here Bellow provides a short scene of brotherly affection. While in Jerusalem, he is surprised by a visit from his brother who, like him, lives in Chicago, but who usually travels in "different directions.") The divisions in *To Jerusalem and Back*, however, seem less reconcilable, for they are political and social ones across wide cultural and historical gaps, and they do not easily submit to esthetic manipulation. The tensions which they produce are present up to, and including, the book's conclusion and cannot easily be discounted by personal action. America, at once a major power and yet devoid of the will to exercise that power effectively, emerges as a somnolent man-child, a naive innocent abroad, an involuntary pawn in the paw of the cunning Russian bear, who is ever alert to any contingency and seizes every opportunity to outwit the heavy-lidded American adversary. Israel, caught in

5. In his essay, "On the Road to Jerusalem: Bellow Now," (*Studies in American Jewish Literature*, III, (Spring, 1977): 1-6), Lavine attempts to explain his disappointment that the book does not offer any clear solution to the Mid-East muddle by suggesting that its antecedents are more fictional than factual. Teddy Kollek, in his review of the book, (*The New Republic*, [November 20, 1976]: 36-37), excuses his own involvement in Bellow's visit by implying that Bellow is only a novelist and what, after all, can one expect from a writer of fiction who comes "as a novelist, not a reporter, and the proper subject of the novelist is the human heart and the human condition in general. This book does not seek out facts and certainly not new ones."

the middle between the two, knows the direction that she should take but is not always able to move freely. Nonetheless, she is impelled to action by a threatened survival and a constant need to justify her existence. The intensity of this three-way struggle raises what Bellow at times refers to as "mere politics" to the level of myth, and, like so much else in the book, reveals him to be more fiction writer than journalist.

Reading *To Jerusalem and Back* as more a work of fiction than a piece of factual reportage helps to account for those many areas of Israeli life that are missing from its pages. Bellow seems no more concerned with depicting the broad spectrum of Israeli society than he is with portraying the social diversity of America. The Israelis here, like most of his Americans, are at the presumed center of power—the intellectuals, the government officials, the well-read and inordinately articulate, the Western-oriented, Europeanized Middle Easterner, who might be found in social gatherings in London and Paris as well as Jerusalem. A case in point is Bellow's sharply-etched portrait of Abba Eban, the former Foreign Minister now a mere member of the Knesset. Amid the austere surroundings of the Knesset's dining hall—this one for meat eaters in conformity with Jewish dietary laws—Bellow struggles valiantly with still another Israeli variation of chicken while he creates a memorable cameo description of an Eban that resembles much of Moses Herzog and perhaps not a little of Bellow himself: "He does and does not wish to be where he is. His thoughts go about the world like a satellite. His is a type with which I am completely familiar" (p. 53). His is a type with which Bellow's readers are familiar as well; the actual Eban becomes less important than this succinct characterization of a mentally restless, modern man. Bellow takes Eban and makes him a type, a model of that mental and spiritual wanderer who is rarely content to be, without simultaneously contemplating his becoming.

Eban resembles other Bellow characters with whom he shares an immersion in modern anxieties, anxieties which are endemic to modern culture but which are particularly identifiable with Jewish Americans. Bellow's fictional characters, while they are still very much his, are likewise part of an extensive body of Jewish-American literature which has become celebrated for successfully articulating a necessarily-dual vision. Jewish-American literature, like the culture that it represents so well, is the product of a bifurcated existence, a hyphenated identity which forms a fragile and often uncomfortable synthesis. Jewish Americans have often found it necessary to walk a tightrope between an American history to which they bear firm allegiance if questionable association, and Jewish history which, since 1948, has developed a new center of gravity. Never fully at one with American history, Jewish Americans now find themselves beyond the pale of modern Jewish history and must confront an Israel which can no longer be dismissed as a symbolic utterance.

Jewish-American literature has often conveyed that sense of restless

displacement which American Jews might well prefer to remain submerged. While the elders of Jewish-American society have often focused on the drive to become Americanized, the literature, perhaps perversely, has often pointed out the cost of "making it," the dangling condition of being alien to one's adopted history and to one's native tradition. Many Jewish-American writers express this condition as an at times overwhelming sense of loss, an irretrievable distance from the immigrant tradition which, at the very least, contained a vestige of continuity.⁶ Understandably, these writers have been more cogent about their sense of displacement in America than they have been about their distance from a born-again Israel. Except for a brief appearance in Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* and in Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, Israel hardly exists as a necessary imaginative construction for the Jewish-American writer, and even in these two instances Bellow and Roth offer a vague nationalism and an extended comic aria on the social and psychological benefits of exile.

All the more reason, therefore, that *To Jerusalem and Back* may be considered a significant departure for the Jewish-American writer, for here Bellow overtly confronts the meaning of an existent Israel as the nerve center of modern Jewish history. That confrontation, however, is as undeniably in keeping with his Jewish-American sensibility as are all his other writings. *To Jerusalem and Back* is as much a product of Jewish-American culture as Hillel Halkin's recent *Letters to An American Jewish Friend*, which he subtitles "a Zionist's polemic."⁷ Halkin addresses his readers from the vantage point of a sometime American Jew who is no longer concerned with those identity problems that continue to disturb his former countrymen. In contrast, Bellow approaches his entire Israeli experience as an outsider, albeit a knowledgeable one, and establishes from the outset a distance which is indicative of a commitment significantly different from Halkin's. This distance is maintained throughout the book and is immediately apparent in the opening scene, which seems little more than a description of Bellow's flight from London to Tel Aviv, but is as carefully orchestrated as if it were a scene in a novel.

His arrival in Israel is prefaced by a confrontation with his childhood no less indicative of his Jewish-American sensibility than Alexander

6. There is little question that the immigrant tradition and the metaphor of the immigrant have been a significant presence in Jewish-American literature, not only at its beginnings but even as recently as Doctorow's *Ragtime*. Young American Jews, even today, pay tribute to this tradition in such works, for example, as the film *Hester Street*. Yet much of this tribute, although unquestionably a labor of love, seems at times a desperate attempt to hold on to the tradition before it slips through the fingers. Irving Howe, in his labor of love, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976), and again in his introduction to *Jewish-American Stories* (New York, 1977), rightly wonders how much longer that tradition will be able to serve the needs of Jewish-American writers: "My own view is that American Jewish fiction has probably moved past its high point. Insofar as this body of writing draws heavily from the immigrant experience, it must suffer a depletion of resources, a thinning-out of materials and memories" (p. 16).

7. Hillel Halkin, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend; A Zionist's Polemic* (Philadelphia, 1977).

Portnoy's nostalgic reminiscences of "the old bunch" as his plane circles Lod airport. Portnoy's musings on his lost innocence confirm the necessary exile that he meets upon landing, and he weeps not in the joy of coming home but in the knowledge that he is forever destined to be homeless. Bellow's confrontation is characteristically less dramatic, his fear of displacement less manic; and, yet, as he is challenged with increasing passion by a young Hasid to "return to the fold," he is forced to consider his irreversible distance from Jewish history. The Hasid is, "under Western eyes," an object of ridicule; he is old-, if not otherworldly, naive, ingenuous. Yet he does not appear as entirely negative. For all his lack of sophistication, and Bellow is particularly astounded that he does not even know Einstein's name, he is nonetheless seemingly at peace with his God and one with his history. The more the Hasid implores him to eat only kosher food, and he is even willing to pay him, the more Bellow feels compelled to defend his worldliness. The Hasid is a visible reminder that he, unlike the Hasid, has to work at being Jewish, because for him the life and the work are no longer the same. "To me there is nothing foreign in these hats, sidelocks, and fringes. . . ." explains Bellow, "at the age of six, I myself wore a tallith katan, or scapular, under my shirt. . . ." (p. 1). But at the age of sixty, the man who ponders the Hasid's unworldliness and who defends his own sophistication is far removed from the antique artifacts that the Hasid wears so naturally. The Hasid may, indeed, be "a piece of history, an antiquity," but his unity is more than a little enviable. Bellow, in contrast, as a reminder of "what deformities the modern age can produce in the seed of Abraham," is a sometimes less than amusing aberration, who can no more throw off the trappings of discontinuity than he can agree to become kosher again.

For Bellow, there is no law of return to a Judaism which he has literally and figuratively outgrown. He accepts his condition, sometimes with a characteristic shrug-of-the-shoulders reminiscent of Herzog, but with the knowledge that his choice, once made, is firm. From this vantage point, he is ready to be welcomed by an Israel which, if it receives him and the Hasid impartially, is, nonetheless, perceived differently by each. The Hasid is undoubtedly immediately engulfed by a community which makes little distinction between New York and Jerusalem, while for Bellow that distinction is necessary for both life and art. Bellow, as a Jewish American, does not want to be engulfed (his word is "enfiladed") or even received into a community which is not his to choose, and, indeed, as he immediately points out, his view of Israel, though perhaps shared by others, is, above all, "a personal account." As the quasi-objective observer that he wishes to be, he is never fully part of the Israeli scene, but, rather, savors his distance in order to present what he considers to be a balanced view. This is certainly the American posture, and Bellow, though he makes no secret of his Jewishness, attempts an impartial presentation of an admittedly complex situation. The Israel that emerges, balanced or not, is,

above all, a necessary creation, a literary conceit which at once allows Bellow to express his needs and to ask his readers to share theirs with him.

Bellow's needs, like his countrymen's, are best fulfilled by an Israel which, for all its imperfections, must, nonetheless, offer a significant spiritual contrast to an indolent Western world no longer in direct contact with the source of its civilized values:

Life in Israel is far from enviable, yet there is a clear purpose in it. People are fighting for the society they have created, and for life and honor. . . . But the connection of democratic nations with the civilization that formed them is growing loose and queer. They seem to have forgotten what they are about (p. 180).

As ever, Israel must be "a light unto the nations," even if involuntarily. In this scenario, the exigencies of the modern political situation are actually beneficial: "The wars, Israelis will sometimes tell you, have kept off the danger of Levantine slackness and corruption" (p. 181). The West needs Israel in order to withstand its own dissolution, even as Christianity needs the Jews in order to insure its own continuity. ("At times I suspect that the world would be glad to see the last of its Christianity, and that it is the persistency of the Jews that prevents it" [p. 20].)

These burdens placed upon Israel often seem unbearable, and Bellow is quick to recognize the immeasurable constraints of being an Israeli in a world which seemingly needs Israel so desperately but which, nonetheless, threatens its survival:

Israelis must, in fact, bear in mind four thousand years of Jewish history. The world has been thrown into their arms and they are required to perform an incredible balancing act. Another way of putting it: no people has to work so hard on so many levels as this one. . . . These people are actively, individually involved in universal history. I don't see how they can bear it (p. 62).

Throughout the book, Bellow returns to this refrain, as if to add still another dimension to the old adage that it is difficult to be a Jew, particularly when the Jew is also an Israeli: "What you do know is that there is one fact of life unchanged by the creation of a Jewish state; you cannot take your right to live for granted" (p. 35). To live under such conditions requires, as he puts it, "an incredible balancing act," which results in a society of often excruciating paradox.

That Bellow's observations often reflect at least some of the realities of living in Israel is undeniable. And, yet, the contradictions of Israeli society sometimes appear more burdensome to the non-Israeli than to those who must work out their lives amid its labyrinthine complexities. After all, theirs is a daily confrontation which must inevitably produce a perspective necessarily different from those who, like Bellow, require a constant separation between contrastive states in order to reconcile Israel

with their needs. Like many travellers to Israel, Bellow brings to his visit a number of expectations which need to be maintained. While these do not deny the validity of his observations, they serve more, perhaps, to reinforce his own historical situation. Bellow is drawn to Israel because he is a Jew and because he is deeply concerned, not only with its fate, but with the fate of Western civilization. Unlike the Israeli, he is able to stand back and contemplate the unique role that Israel is called upon to play in contemporary world politics. And, at those times, when Israel may falter, when it, too, may sink into a torpor uncomfortably reminiscent of other Western societies, Bellow, again unlike the Israeli, can subsume the everyday reality within the larger context of historical necessity. Whereas Israelis must struggle with the physical before they may reach the metaphysical, Bellow is able to leap over the physical to create a metaphysical Israel which remains inviolate even as the physical Israel may be mired in normalcy.

Bellow's most cogent expression of this much-needed separation occurs at that point in his account when he is perhaps most distressed by Israel's political inaction: "Israel's political leaders do not seem to be awake," he complains, and he wonders whether "the Israeli veterans of hardships, massacres, and wars know how to save themselves? Has the experience of crisis taught them what to do?" (p. 167). His response to his own question is, in effect, to sidestep the present situation by attempting to separate Israel into two distinct entities:

I sometimes think there are two Israels. The real one is territorially insignificant. The other, the mental Israel, is immense, a country inestimably important, playing a major role in the world, as broad as all history. . . (p. 168).

While such separation may be helpful to Bellow, and to many of his readers, it nonetheless imposes a Diaspora mentality on the Israeli condition and in some ways increases what is admittedly an overwhelming burden. By leaping over the present into the totality of history, Bellow diminishes the validity of a territorial significance which has been, historically, the core of the Zionist idea. Furthermore, his metaphysical leap displays a virtuosity possible only to those who can jump over the net with ease because they have been playing a different game.

Perhaps only a writer with an intense urban sensibility can refer to an Israel which is territorially insignificant. As "a walker in the city" (Kazin), as a "city boy" (Wouk), Bellow, along with his fellow Jewish-American writers, reflects a collective history whose memories are citified. Growing up Jewish in an American city often meant a necessary projection upward and outward beyond the fire escapes and clotheslines toward the beckoning spires of Manhattan and the gold coast of Lake Michigan. Growing up likewise meant growing out, and in that process the old neighborhood was a place from which to escape, a jumping-off point which, in time, indeed,

became “territorially insignificant.” In contrast, growing up in Israel, whether in city or kibbutz, involves an intense closeness with the land. Israeli children, even today, know the land both historically, as the site of numerous historical events, and naturally, as a veritable garden which has often been redeemed from years of neglect. To a certain extent, the land itself assumes values which transcend sectarian political beliefs. Few Israelis would consider their land, either in the private or the public sector, as territorially insignificant, for they have fought too often and too well to maintain both their presence and its integrity.

The realities of Israeli life today suggest that an effective separation between real and ideal is practically impossible, for the burdens of the real are usually too omnipresent to allow the leisure required to idealize. Bellow’s rhetorical separation is entirely understandable in the context of Jewish-American needs, and in the context of his own writings, but it is somewhat irrelevant to a society that finds itself with the constant need to justify the real, both to itself and to others. Although a remarkable testament to the centrality of Israel both for American Jews and for the West, *To Jerusalem and Back* ultimately says more about the ideal Israel and about the people who require that ideal than it does about the daily grind of being an Israeli.

Characteristically, the most extensive discussion on the future of Israel is reserved for a Chicago meeting with a Jewish-American friend in what Bellow describes as “a neighborhood joint.” Here, amid the comfortable if low-key surroundings of a Hyde Park hostelry, Bellow and Morris Janowitz, two deeply concerned American Jews, discuss the necessary political decisions that Israel must take in order to preserve itself as a meaningful nation. Whatever the soundness of their political opinions, their discussion is strikingly applicable to what have all along been the primary concerns of the book. Perhaps Israel’s fate will, indeed, be decided outside its borders, and there is little doubt that American Jews will have a major voice in that decision. Although many, if not most, of them will decide to remain in America, they will hopefully continue to regard Israel as the center of their Jewish identity. In *To Jerusalem and Back*, Bellow proves an eloquent spokesman for those Jews who, like him and Morris Janowitz, need Israel in order to preserve their values, even as Israel needs them to come and go with a freedom which is both enviable and necessary. While it is certainly true that Israel needs American Jews who will buy a one-way ticket to Jerusalem, it likewise needs American Jews who will continue to insure that Jerusalem remain a place to which they can travel.

Malamud's Short Stories: A Reshaping of Hasidic Tradition

MARCIA B. GEALY

IN HIS BOOK, *WORLD OF OUR FATHERS*, Irving Howe calls Bernard Malamud "the most enigmatic, even mysterious of American Jewish writers" and "a grandson without visible line of descent—of the best Yiddish writers." He concludes that Malamud's use of motifs of the past probably "came to him (as Yiddish critics like to say) 'through the air,' particles of culture floating about, still charged with meaning and potent enough to be reshaped in American fiction."¹

These "particles of culture" which characterize Malamud's best writing, particularly some of his finest short stories, I would identify with Hasidism, a Jewish religious movement founded shortly before the middle of the eighteenth century by the East European saint and mystic, Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov. Some of the major teachings of Hasidism, a transformation or reinterpretation of an older Jewish mysticism which made it accessible to the masses of the people, are the need to journey inward to achieve salvation, the importance of identification with a holy man or teacher, the primacy of love, and the reality of evil. In addition, the Hasidic belief in the sanctity of the tale, the notion that a story could have potency to effect change, led to the development of a vast and rich folklore. Hasidic tales permeated the culture of the East European *shtetl* until its destruction in the twentieth century and directly, or indirectly, have influenced the thinking of East European Jews and their descendants. If Malamud recalls for us the humor of Sholom Aleichem and, more significantly, the irony of I.L. Peretz, if his tales infuse us with the same sense of mystery that we find in the recreated Hasidic tales of Martin Buber, it is because he shares a common past with all of these writers.²

Among his finest short stories, there are five which particularly

1. *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 595–596.

2. While a few critics have noted Hasidic strains in Malamud's writing, none has investigated them in depth. See, for example, Peter L. Hayes, "The Complex Pattern of Redemption in *The Assistant*," *The Centennial Review*, 13:2 (Spring 1969): 200–214. In no way am I suggesting that Malamud consciously utilized Hasidic sources in his work. On the contrary, Malamud told me in an interview in New York City, 22 March 1974, that he is aware of no direct influence of Hasidism on his work but that he may have been influenced indirectly by his reading of Yiddish literature (in translation). What I find significant is that Malamud's father came from "Zbrish in or aound Kamenetz Podolsk," a city in the western Ukraine and a former capitol of Podolia. Podolia is the legendary birthplace of the Baal Shem Tov and was an important early center of Hasidic influence.

illustrate Malamud's use of Hasidic themes: "The Last Mohican," "The Magic Barrel," "Idiots First," "The Jewbird," and "The Silver Crown." All of them deal with old-world Jews, displaced or in tension with the world around them; there is a *schnorrer* (beggar), a *shadchan* (matchmaker), even the suggestion of a wonder-working rabbi. From Yiddish folklore the author draws on a talking bird and the angel of death, and each of these figures takes on special significance within the Hasidic tradition. To understand the Hasidic elements in these short stories is to enrich our appreciation of some of Malamud's most creative work.

The motif of the journey as a means to the discovery of self, an inward journey that promises salvation, is employed most successfully in "The Last Mohican."³ Arthur Fidelman, a "self confessed failure as a painter," (136) goes to Italy to become an art critic and learns, instead, to become a *mensh*. Fidelman's mentor in Rome is Shimon Susskind, refugee from Israel, a combination *schnorrer*, wandering Jew, and Virgil. Fidelman, like most of Malamud's young Jewish intellectuals, is out of touch with his past and reluctant to give of himself. He comes to Italy with an intense passion for Italian history and to study Giotto. When Susskind asks Fidelman for his suit, the student reacts with annoyance; he is, after all, supporting himself with hard-earned money and has only two suits. Pursued by Susskind through the streets of Rome, Fidelman turns into a pursuer when he suspects the beggar has stolen his briefcase. His search for Susskind leads him to a Sephardic synagogue, a Jewish cemetery, and, ultimately, the beggar's meager hovel. Confronted with the realization of his own people's history, but more with the knowledge of Susskind's particular suffering, Fidelman is finally able to identify with the beggar and gives him the suit. Even when he realizes that Susskind has burned his manuscript (probably for fuel), Fidelman finally has the insight to forgive everything. After all, as Susskind had noted, "The words were there but the spirit was missing" (160).

Fidelman's identification with Susskind starts early. As he departs from the railway station in Rome he has a vision of himself, an "unexpectedly intense sense of his being" that has been stimulated by the appearance of Susskind, a man of about his own height, who, in spite of his emaciated frame and bizarre dress, somehow suggests Fidelman (137). The student protests against this identification, wanting to give Susskind only token recognition at best, for he has come to Italy to know Giotto. But Susskind, in hounding Fidelman, is suggesting that he will never know the Italians until he knows himself. The student does not start to suspect this truth until his pursuit of Susskind compels him to face the refugee's suffering. As his understanding grows, even his dress changes, for he puts on the beret and pointed shoes that link him with the refugee (152). But it

3. "The Last Mohican," in *The Magic Barrel* (New York: Dell, 1970), pp. 136-160. All subsequent page references are to this edition and will be included in the text. *The Magic Barrel* was originally published in New York by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958.

is only when he decides to stay in Rome, more to find Susskind in order "to know man" (155) than to hope for the recovery of his manuscript, that we can be sure that Fidelman is on the way to salvation. When he dreams of Giotto's fresco of St. Francis giving a cloak to a poor knight and is able to identify himself with St. Francis, and Susskind with the knight (159), he can do so because he has first recognized Susskind as a fellow Jew, a man for whom he is responsible.

As a Jewish Virgil, Susskind leads his initiate on a journey through Hell that promises transformation. But, unlike Dante's Virgil, Susskind is no exemplar of cool and dispassionate reason. On the contrary, he has all the bravado, all the *huzpah* (arrogance), associated with the common beggar or *schnorrer* of East European *shtetl* society. Because he is a product of this society (138), Susskind knows that as a beggar he is an occasion for *mizvos* (good deeds) and, thus, an instrument of grace. If he feels himself at an advantage, if he does not hesitate to demand his due, it is because he realizes that the more fortunate need him as an object of charity. In the culture of the *shtetl* it is the *schnorrer* who opens "the portals of heaven"⁴ for the more fortunate man. The Hasidim emphasize this belief with the words of Rabbi Shmelke:

The poor man gives the rich man more than the rich gives the poor. More than the poor needs the rich man, the rich is in need of the poor.⁵

Like most *schnorrers*, Susskind is also a *luftmensch*, who lives on air (144), and is usually on the run. But there is also a sense of mystery about him; he is, after all, a refugee from Israel, homeless even in the homeland, destined, it seems, to keep on running. In the final analysis, the power of "The Last Mohican" can be attributed to Shimon Susskind who, with all his grotesque humor, can be identified with the wandering beggars and fools of Hasidic folklore. Like them, he is an enigmatic mixture of the commonplace and mysterious, the saintly and demonic; like them, he makes people dream and leads them to themselves.

"The Magic Barrel," the title story of Malamud's first collection,⁶ is probably the best one that he has written to date. Like so many of Malamud's better stories, which suspend us between the real and the supernatural, "The Magic Barrel" also contains within it an artful fusion of Hasidism's basic teachings. Leo Finkle, a young rabbinical student, must learn the lesson of the heart over the head. He does so from Pinye Salzman, a questionable mentor, who leads him on a tortuous journey and through an experience of evil. Only by identifying with, and embracing,

4. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken, 1962), p. 211.

5. Quoted by Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters*, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken, 1947), p. 191. Hereafter this title will be shortened to *Early Masters*.

6. *The Magic Barrel*, pp. 169-188.

this evil can Leo find himself and the love that he so desperately seeks.

As a tormented yeshivah student in search of a wife because “he might find it easier to win himself a congregation if he were married” (169), Leo is more concerned with the law than with its spirit. Even his coming to a marriage broker, an “ancient and honorable” profession in the Jewish community (170), is more the result of his fear of looking for a bride for himself than of his respect for Jewish tradition (179). Because of his desperation, he lets himself be manipulated into a meeting with Lily Hirschorn, an old maid school teacher, but his experience with Lily, who in her poignant honesty sparks Leo’s own, reveals to him a terrifying insight: he had come to God not because he loved Him, but because he did not (179). Once he is confronted with the knowledge of his own unworthiness and terrorized by what he feels is an inability to love, Leo suffers mightily. But he accepts his suffering with some consolation; “perhaps with this new knowledge of himself he would be more successful than in the past” (180). The proof of this success is his attraction to Stella, the matchmaker’s renegade daughter, in whom Leo sees a suggestion of evil. That Leo can identify with evil and say “It is thus with us all” (183) is the mark of his maturity and his ultimate redemption.

As an old-world *shadchan*, Pinye Salzman represents a classic type in Jewish folklore. Noted for a tendency toward humbug and a genius for euphemistically glossing over the defects of clients, the *shadchan* is not without a comic pathos. As the guide who shows to one who is lost the way through the mysterious maze of love and redemption, Salzman is reminiscent, in some ways, of Shimon Susskind of “The Last Mohican.” Slightly built to the point of wasting away, in ill-fitting clothes and smelling of fish, Salzman, like the refugee from Israel, is comic and grotesque, yet not without a sad dignity. If there is a suggestion of the demonic about Susskind, it also clings to Salzman, for Leo sees him as a “commercial cupid” (185) and a “cloven-hoofed Pan” (177). To trust in Salzman, the yeshivah student must suspend his rationality. Also, like Susskind, Salzman is a *luftmensch* who lives on air as well as in his socks (185), the implication being that he lives on hopes and miracles. Finally, as with Susskind, there is an air of mystery surrounding him. Does his magic barrel exist or is it a “figment of imagination” (183)? Did he plant his daughter Stella’s picture in the envelope to entice Leo or was it just an accident (187)? In the world of the Hasidim, what the imagination creates has its own kind of truth, and, as the Baal Shem Tov has taught, “there are no accidents.”⁷ Thus, the whole tenor of the story suggests that Salzman planned the final meeting between the student and his daughter for their mutual benefit, and if, at the end, he chants the prayers for the dead, he

7. Dov Ber ben Samuel, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov: the Earliest Collection of Legends About the Founder of Hasidism*, trans. and ed. Dan Ben Amos and Jerome R. Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), tale 186.

does so within the context of a culture where death is but the first step in the process of transformation.⁸

As the embodiment of evil ("she should burn in hell" Salzman says of her ([186]), yet with eyes that suggest a "desperate innocence" (187), Stella incorporates that wonderful mixture of experience and innocence that we associate with a Malamud heroine like Helen Bober in *The Assistant*. Stella is not a realized character, of course; we never hear her speak and we see her only in picture, first in the photograph that Leo finds in Salzman's envelope and, finally, in the stunning tableau that Malamud presents at the end of his tale. In the photograph that first captivates Leo, Stella is hauntingly familiar yet absolutely strange; her face reflects deep suffering and somehow gives an impression of evil (183). Yet Leo sees in her "his own redemption," for, as the matchmaker put it, "If you can love her, then you can love anybody" (187–188). Stella is, in other words, like Helen Bober, a combination Lilith-*Shekhinah* or destroyer-preserver figure who tests the hero and offers pain, judgment, and ultimate insight. The female in that role, as demon and godly presence, is an interesting aspect of Jewish mysticism and Hasidic folklore. In the Kabbalah, the demonic is seen as the offspring of the feminine sphere and, in Kabbalah symbolism, woman represents the quality of stern judgment. Nevertheless, as Gershom Scholem points out,⁹ this is not a negation of womanhood because of the paradoxical Kabbalistic conception of the *Shekhinah*, the feminine element in God. The *Shekhinah* or Divine Presence of God is thought of as the queen or mother of the world of sanctity, just as Lilith, the "harlot, the wicked or the black" is thought of as the queen or mother of the realm of evil. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind the Hasidic insistence on the unity of all things, on the acceptance of evil for "if there were no evil, there would be no good, for good is the counterpart of evil."¹⁰ Finally, dressed in red and white, the traditional colors of sin and purity, Stella waits for Leo at the end of his quest, an emblem of the good and evil that the hero must embrace as a seal of his redemption.

The final tableau—Leo running toward Stella with violets and rosebuds, while violins and lit candles revolve in the sky—transports us into a dream world where anything is possible. Many critics, writing of this scene, have remarked on its affinity with the paintings of Marc Chagall, and, not surprisingly, for Malamud's world, like Chagall's, is the visionary

8. Richard Reynolds notes that the prayer for the dead, the *Kadish*, is closely associated with "Messianic times when resurrection will take place" so that Salzman's final prayer is for effecting Stella's resurrection. See Richard Reynolds, "The Magic Barrel": Pinye Salzman's *Kadish*," *Studies in Short Fiction* 10 (Winter, 1973): 100–102.

9. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 37–38 and *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1971 ed., s.v. "Lilith." In Jewish folklore Stella or star would suggest the angel Astaribo who is sometimes associated with Lilith.

10. The Rabbi of Zlotchov, quoted by Buber, *Early Masters*, pp. 144–145.

world of Hasidism where all of God's creation, good and evil, death and life, swirl together in a unified whole.¹¹

The Hasidic belief in inner salvation, an important theme in Malamud's early stories, is not as prevalent in his later work, where other Hasidic teachings, such as the potency of love (or hate) and the terrors of evil (both, of course, associated with the process of transformation in the earlier work) are more prevalent. Three stories which skillfully demonstrate these themes are "Idiots First" and "The Jewbird" (in *Idiots First*) and "The Silver Crown" (in *Rembrandt's Hat*).¹²

"Idiots First," is based on a common motif in folk literature: the confrontation of a mortal with the Angel of Death. In Jewish legends "some exceptional act of piety or benevolence" can often prevail against death, as is seen in the folk exegesis on Proverbs: 10:2; 11:4—"Charity delivers from Death."¹³ In the culture of the Hasidim, though death is accepted, even embraced, there are times when death is postponed because of special circumstances. The tale is told of the Baal Shem Tov who, wanting the recovery of Rabbi Leibush, "scolds" the Angel of Death and causes him to run away.¹⁴ There is also the story of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak who prays for a four day extension to his life so that he might accomplish certain tasks and, as the tale goes, it was so.¹⁵

Within the same tradition, Malamud weaves a story of old Mendel and his idiot son, Isaac, and Mendel's attempt to forestall the Angel of Death until he can safeguard Isaac's passage on a train to California. Desperately in need of thirty-five dollars to complete the purchase of Isaac's ticket before midnight, Mendel visits a pawnbroker, a Jewish philanthropist who gives "only to institutions" (8), and a poverty-stricken rabbi who, despite the screams of his wife, tosses Mendel his new fur-lined caftan. During the length of his quest, Mendel is pursued by Ginzburg, "a bearded man with hairy nostrils and a fishy smell" (13), the East European Jewish version of the Angel of Death. Finally, with enough money in hand to purchase the train ticket, Mendel is stopped by the ticket collector—Ginzburg in uniform—and is told that his time is up. He pleads for a short extension to put Isaac on the train and when Ginzburg will not relent, lunges at him crying, "You bastard, don't you understand what it means human?" (14). Wrestling nose to nose, Mendel sees reflected in

11. Alfred Werner points out the importance of Hasidism as an influence on Chagall's work. Unlike Malamud, Chagall came from a family in which Hasidism "prevailed." See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1971 ed., s.v. "Chagall, Marc" by Alfred W[erner].

12. *Idiots First* (New York: Delta, 1965), pp. 3–15; 101–113. Originally published in New York by Farrar, Straus, 1963. *Rembrandt's Hat* (New York: Pocket Books, 1974), pp. 13–38. Originally published in New York by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973. All subsequent page references are to the first edition cited rather than to the one of original publication and will be included in the text.

13. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1971 ed., s.v. "Angel of Death," by Do[v] N[oy].

14. Dov Ber ben Samuel, tale 91.

15. Buber, *Early Masters*, p. 233.

Ginzburg's eyes the depths of his terror, but Ginzburg sees in Mendel's eyes the extent of his own wrath (15). Utterly astounded, Ginzburg relents and allows Mendel the extra time to put Isaac on the train. Afterwards, Mendel returns, seeking Ginzburg.

The power of "Idiots First" lies in its masterful tension between terror and hope and the artfulness with which we are suspended between the real and the supernatural. Death is a messenger who croaks "*Gut yontif*" (Good holiday) (9), an omnipresent force that talks of "cosmic universal law" (13), but who picks his teeth with a matchstick (14). If Ginzburg is, on the one hand, inexorable, he is, on the other, able to reflect on himself (15). We see here Malamud's gift in creating a dream-like landscape, for, while the setting is New York, the deserted streets and the reappearance of the bearded stranger transport us to somewhere beyond. Finally, there is Malamud's special way of combining affirmation with a suggestive, mocking irony. Mendel has conquered death but only for a few minutes; Isaac, a half-wit, will go to California, but to the care of an eighty-one year old uncle, and how long will Uncle Leo live? In the context of both the story and the Hasidic tradition, however, neither such qualifications nor such questions ultimately matter. As an idiot, Isaac is an example of the world's unfortunates, but the blessed of God. If Mendel forestalls Death for only a little while to perform a good deed, Hasidic holy men have prayed for the same favor. Finally, Death is not the ultimate enemy but a friend to be embraced when the right time comes. Thus, Mendel ascends the stairs to seek out Ginzburg (15).¹⁶

"The Jewbird," a combination of beast fable and parable, emphasizes the Hasidic teaching of the reality of evil. If a man will not accept evil as part of himself, if he cannot say with the Hasidic rebbe, "I experience it [evil] when I meet myself,"¹⁷ if he is determined only to project it on to another, then evil has the power to destroy that man rather than to lead him on the pathway to good. Malamud incorporates this teaching in his story of the Cohen family and their encounter with a talking bird—a "skinny . . . frazzled . . . black-type longbeaked bird" (101)—who flies into their New York apartment one day and announces "I'm a Jewbird" (103).

According to Samuel Bellman,¹⁸ the Jewbird as a talking "crow" seems to hark back to Poe's "The Raven," but it would seem to me more appropriate to place it within the context of Jewish tradition. Talking animals are common in Jewish folklore and are distinctive for the ways in

16. Sidney Richman writes that "'Idiots First' ends at the moment when Mendel leaps at Ginzburg's throat and not, as Malamud has it, when Ginzburg relents," in *Bernard Malamud* (New York: Twayne, 1966), p. 127. I believe it is important to note how a holy man can prevail against the Angel of Death and ultimately be willing to accept him.

17. Martin Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven: A Chronicle*, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 57.

18. Samuel I. Bellman, "Women, Children, and Idiots First: The Transformation Psychology of Bernard Malamud" in *Bernard Malamud and the Critics*, ed. Leslie A. Field and Joyce W. Field (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p. 25.

which they take over Jewish mannerisms and modes of speech.¹⁹ Malamud's Jewbird, Schwartz, who smells of herring and speaks with a Yiddish accent, is an obvious product of the East European *shtetl*. In addition, there is the Hasidic belief that, under special circumstances, a man can be turned into an animal. The tale is told of the Baal Shem Tov's encounter with a man who has been turned into a horse for neglecting to pay a debt.²⁰ Mrs. Cohen wonders if Schwartz "might be an old Jew changed into a bird by somebody." Schwartz's answer to the supposition is simply "Who knows? Does God tell us everything?" (104).

But the story may be related to Hasidic teaching in a more profound way, for Harry Cohen could be any man who rejects evil as part of himself, who projects it on to another, and destroys the other without realizing that the other is part of himself. When Schwartz flies into Cohen's apartment asking for sanctuary, he says he is fleeing from "Anti-semeetes" (102), but Cohen's fear and persecution of Schwartz make him the anti-Semite who does Schwartz the most harm.

Cohen can't stand Schwartz's eating habits, his bedraggled appearance, his bad smell; he even suspects that Schwartz might be some kind of "devil" (108). But Cohen's wife and child beg that the bird be allowed to stay and soon Schwartz becomes a tutor to the son. Though the boy's grades improve, the elder Cohen is simply resentful and wants Schwartz to keep on migrating. One night, when his wife and son are out of the apartment, Cohen attacks the Jewbird, whirls him round and round his head—in the way that the scapegoat fowl is whirled round the head of the penitent on the eve of Yom Kippur²¹—and tosses him into the night. Cohen destroys the Jewbird for what he thinks is the bird's offensiveness; actually, as the Hasidim would see it, he is destroying that frightening part of himself which is necessary for his completion.

The terror and pessimism of "The Jewbird" are lightened, at least until the end, by Malamud's use of whimsical fantasy. The bird's fractured English, his preference for "matjes" over "schmaltz" herring, his request for the *Jewish Morning Journal* (104–105) all add an element of humor to an otherwise grim story. The final effect is melancholy, however; as the ancient tradition teaches and as Hasidic story confirms, a Jew (man) can be his own worst enemy.²²

19. Nathan Ausubel, ed., *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore: Stories, Traditions, Legends, Humor, Wisdom and Folk Songs of the Jewish People* (New York: Crown, 1948), pp. 623–624.

20. Dov Ber ben Samuel, tale 215. See also Malamud's tale "Talking Horse" in *Rembrandt's Hat*, for a delightful Jewish version of the birth of a centaur.

21. Zborowski and Herzog, p. 394. In ancient days the scapegoat was sent out to the desert carrying the sins of the community. In *shtetl* life, the fowl was substituted for the scapegoat and was consumed by the family at the meals either prior to, or after, Yom Kippur.

22. Buber, *Early Masters*, p. 322. Buber notes a Talmudic tradition (*Gittin* 55b) which holds that a petty quarrel between two Jewish families caused one to denounce the other to the Romans, an event which set off the Roman war against Judaea and led to the destruction of the Temple.

In an even more somber tone, "The Silver Crown," the opening story of *Rembrandt's Hat*, is also concerned with the reality of evil; in particular, the terrors of repressed hatred. Interestingly enough, Malamud has said that the story is based on a *New York Times* story of the arrest of two Hasidic faith healers in the Bronx, but that the characters are his own creation.²³

Albert Gans, a high school biology teacher, desperately seeks aid from a wonder-working rabbi to heal his dying father, who suffers from a mysterious ailment. Cancer "of the heart" the old man calls it (13). The young Gans, "naturally empiric and objective—you might say non-mystical" (19), goes to the faith healer against his better judgment; it is his last attempt to "repay" his father for his generosity towards him (21). The faith-healer, Rabbi Lifshitz, though not specifically identified as one, is almost certainly a Hasid. He studies a mystical book "like the Kabbalah" (20) and seems to have inherited the power of healing from his father and grandfather (30).²⁴ He insists that his idiot daughter, Rifkele, is in the reflection of God (17), for it is love, not reason or faith, that puts us in closest touch with Divine Grace (21). The rabbi says that it is Albert's love that will heal his father, but he charges a fee to construct a sign of this love, a silver crown. Though Albert reluctantly agrees to purchase the crown—the biggest, most expensive one to accomplish the miracle—his pride in rationality and his doubts about the rabbi so overwhelm him that he returns the next day to demand his money back. In the final confrontation, as the rabbi pleads with Albert to think of his father, the young Gans, in his fury at what he thinks has been a deception, unmasks his own feelings and wishes his father dead. Calling him a "murderer," the rabbi rushes into his daughter's arms; fleeing from the revelation of his own feelings, Albert rushes down the stairs. An hour later, the elder Gans expires (38).

The conflict in "The Silver Crown" is not so much between doubt and faith as between love and hate. In the rabbi's words:

Doubts we all got. We doubt God and God doubts us. This is natural on account of the nature of existence. Of this kind doubts I am not afraid so long as you love your father. (21)

Twice the rabbi asks Albert if he loves his father and both times Albert avoids answering the question directly (19,25). If Albert wants to save his father it is from a sense of gratitude and from a concern that his own "conscience be in the clear" (24). But Albert's initial unwillingness to face his repressed hatred for his father and his closing cry of "He hates me, the son-of-a-bitch, I hope he croaks" (38) suggest that the final unmasking will

23. Quoted by Curt Leviant, "Bernard Malamud: My Characters are God-Haunted," *Hadassah*, (June 1974): 19.

24. It is not unusual for a *zaddik* or holy man to pass on his special powers to his descendants. See Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters*, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken, 1948), pp. 8–9.

leave him with a lifetime of regret. When he runs down the stairs with a “spike-ridden headache” (38), he is fleeing from a terrifying recognition of self that his pride cannot accept.

The power of “The Silver Crown” comes from the tension that it evokes between the mysterious and the commonplace, and from the artistry with which it explores the complexities of human nature. Is the rabbi a “clever confidence man” (24) or a genuine magician like the Baal Shem Tov?²⁵ Did Gans “murder” his father, as the rabbi claims, or did the old man die of natural causes? As in so many of Malamud’s tales, the answers to such questions do not ultimately matter. What does matter is that Gans, in his unwillingness to face his feelings, has denied both his father and himself. That the elder Gans had sensed his son’s true feelings is implied in his cancer “of the heart” (13). If hate is to be turned into love, a man must first accept it as his own. Albert is ensnared in “the conceit born of self-deception,” a sin that, to a Hasid, weighs more than “all the sins of the world.”²⁶ Though there is some question about Rabbi Lifshitz’s authenticity in “The Silver Crown,” there is no doubt that the arch-deceiver of the story is Albert Gans himself.

In many ways “The Silver Crown” is a recreation of characters and themes that Malamud has shown us before. The Bronx biology teacher is another of Malamud’s young intellectuals, skeptical to the bone and reluctant to love. His quest for his father is ultimately tied to his knowledge of self, a knowledge that he would deny rather than face. Rabbi Lifshitz is another of Malamud’s enigmatic holy men, ready to lead the young man into an experience with evil, the instrument for grace or damnation as the hero would choose. The notable difference between “The Silver Crown” and the earlier tales which resemble it, is the pessimism which prevails here. Albert Gans, unlike Arthur Fidelman or Leo Finkle, does not achieve salvation. Yet this tale, like “The Jewbird,” while it does not evoke the delight of the earlier stories of transformation, nevertheless may be seen within the framework of Hasidism. Though its teaching emphasizes inner salvation and joy in all that is, it does not deny the dark side of life and man’s freedom of will. In some Hasidic stories, a man chooses Hell;²⁷ in Bernard Malamud’s fiction he sometimes makes the same choice.

Looking back on Malamud’s short stories, we see a reflection of the same concerns that are found in his novels. The quest for salvation, when achieved, is ultimately tied to the acceptance of self. If a man fails another, he has first failed himself. Yet, I think that none of the novels can match

25. The Baal Shem Tov was known as a magician and a healer of the sick. In one tale he buys a diamond, grinds it down, and gives it to a sick friend to drink; the friend recovers. See Dov Ber ben Samuel, tale 62.

26. Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of the Hasidic Masters*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 234.

27. Dov Ber ben Samuel, tale 66.

his short stories, perhaps because, as Philip Roth has written, Malamud's imagination is "essentially folkloric and didactic,"²⁸ and such an imagination lends itself more readily to the terseness associated with the traditional tale. Remarking on Malamud's relation to the tradition of Yiddish tale telling, Earl Rovit says that

though Malamud captures elusive tones and shadows of the traditional Yiddish tale, he is not at all a teller of tales in the traditional manner. He is an extremely self-conscious short story writer, keenly sensitive to the formal demands of the short story. . . .²⁹

It is here that Rovit's judgments must be qualified, for it seems clear to me that Malamud, in the twentieth century, is doing with the Yiddish tale what Peretz did with it in the nineteenth. Peretz, a reworker of Hasidic folk materials and one of the founding fathers of modern Yiddish literature, is certainly one of its most conscious stylists. His concept of tradition is a dynamic one. Thus, he starts his essay, "What Our Literature Needs," with the phrase: "First of all, tradition." But not long afterward he adds, "Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not proposing that we lock ourselves in a spiritual ghetto. We must leave it—but with our own soul, our own spiritual wealth. We must make exchanges."³⁰ It is in this context that Peretz, who himself broke away from traditional Judaism, puts his own stamp on Hasidic tales. What he does, especially in his later and stronger stories, is to rework folk and Hasidic materials "in a way that appears to be folklike but is actually the product of a sophisticated literary intellect."³¹ Or, to put it another way, what Peretz accomplishes through his sense of distance, his use of irony, his control of tragic vision is, in the words of the Yiddish poet, Jacob Glatstein, "to give the agnostic legitimacy" and "to preserve Jewish life for him."³²

Malamud's reworking of Hasidic themes is not unlike Peretz's; there is the same controlled tension between skepticism and wonder, the same juxtaposition of sacred and profane, the same fusion of Jewish past and present. But, in the best sense of the tradition, Malamud, too, has broken away and found his own distinctive voice. While both writers excel in a kind of bittersweet irony, while both can be ambivalent, even sour in tone, there is often a warmth and humor to Malamud which is more difficult to find in Peretz. Nevertheless, each writer at his best proves the sanctity of the Hasidic tale, for each, by reminding man of his kinship with the past, suggests the possibilities of transformation.

28. Philip Roth, "Imagining Jews," *The New York Review of Books*, 3 (October 1974): 25.

29. Earl H. Rovit, "The Jewish Literary Tradition," in *Bernard Malamud and the Critics*, p. 6.

30. I.L. Peretz, "What Our Literature Needs," *Voices from the Yiddish: Essays, Memoirs, Diaries*, ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp. 25, 27.

31. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, eds. "Introduction," *Selected Stories: I.L. Peretz* (New York: Schocken, 1974), p. 14.

32. Jacob Glatstein, "Peretz and the Jewish Nineteenth Century," *Voices from the Yiddish*, p. 59.

*Egyptian Anti-Semitism**

HOWARD ADELMAN

A JOURNALIST WRITES FROM CAIRO THAT SHE is uncomfortable going into the streets because when she tells people that she is an Israeli she is embarrassed at how often she is kissed. An Egyptian Jew living in Brooklyn since 1956 states that Egypt is his country, that he loves it dearly and that now, for the first time, he anticipates the possibility of resettling there. Such emotional responses to diplomatic contacts between Israel and Egypt suggest that anti-Semitism may be foreign to most Egyptians. Hostility against Jews in Egypt has had only a short history, and relations between Egyptian and Israel leaders could readily reverse it. A return to the long-standing attitudes of Jews and Egyptians toward each other could be an important element in establishing the trust necessary for a lasting peace between Israel and Egypt.

Antagonisms which developed in Egypt during the war with Israel, 1948–1949, are not a consequence of Islamic beliefs, but, on the contrary, a departure from them. In fact, during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, Jews in Egypt experienced better than the usual Muslim begrudging tolerance. Against this background, the development of anti-Semitism in modern Egypt calls urgently for inquiry and analysis now that Egyptians and Jews seek a reconciliation.

In order to appreciate the full significance of recent diplomatic encounters between Egypt and Israel it is necessary to consider three developments in the history of Egyptian attitudes towards the Jews: (1) the early Islamic position concerning Judaism, noting the occasional hostility but acknowledging its basic acceptance of the Jews; (2) the influence of European political institutions which had favorable impact on Jewish circumstances; and (3) the deterioration of Jewish status, paralleling Egyptian political and military catastrophes.

I

In the Koran, the Hadith and Islamic poetry, the Jews are only

* Anti-Semitism cannot be considered here as the usual low-level of hostility against Jews due to normal social and religious tensions present in any country. Neither can attention be paid to the semantic and ethnographic problems of whether Egyptians are Semites. Anti-Semitism will be used to describe contempt for the Jews which becomes a national preoccupation, leading to major hostile actions against them.

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occasionally described in unsavory terms. The overall Muslim attitude towards Jews and infidels is expressed in the Pact of Omar, whose purpose was not to eliminate them but to humiliate and subdue them.¹ Attributed to the second Kalif, 634–644, but actually much later, this pact was the work of Muslim religious, not political, authorities. It taught that non-believers must exert no power over Muslims. Infidels were proscribed from wearing costly garments, riding on saddles, building high houses and expanding houses of worship. For economic benefit and political support, Muslim sovereigns, however, relieved non-believers of the restrictions suggested by the Pact of Omar. Religious leaders, nevertheless, continued to denigrate non-believers while political rulers granted them even greater privileges.² Thus, more than a millenium after the inception of Islam, the correspondence of an Egyptian Muslim scholar, Shaikh Hasan al-Kafrawi, shows that religious authorities still tried to prevent non-believers from violating restrictions placed upon them by the Pact of Omar. His epistle insists upon upholding the tradition of imposing limits on the activities of non-believers.³ The adverse aspects of this approach, however, soon ceased to have much influence upon the treatment of the Jews in Egypt in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of that country.

II

The French conquest of Egypt in 1797, shortly after the death of Shaikh Hasan al-Kafrawi, was a pivotal event, since it brought this principal Islamic country into direct contact with the major forces of modernization in Europe. Napoleon's importation of French institutions helped to prevent the imposition of Islamic ideas on the treatment of non-believers, such as the Jews. This occurred in two ways: through the undermining of the country's traditional views and through the suggestion of new ways for reconstructing society. For example, Napoleon introduced local native government by popular rule, the Institute of Egypt for scientific research, and Arabic foreign language presses. These institutions had a generally liberalizing effect on the Islamic attitude towards outsiders. Of at least equal significance, however, was the fact that Napoleon's officers opened a Freemasons lodge in Cairo in 1798. This was important because, after the Revolution, the French had removed all restrictions against Jewish participation in that movement. Lodges on the French model continued to open in Egypt after Napoleon's forces had left, and the ranks of the Epytian Masons included many influential and progressive Muslims and Jews.⁴

1. Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1972), pp. 13–19.

2. S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 62–68.

3. Marcus, *Op. cit.*

4. Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 7, 10, 56, 209.

Furthermore, the rivalry between France and England for influence in the Mediterranean exposed Egypt to European governmental organization. Egypt adopted penal codes, national courts, a parliamentary system, and general elections based on European models. In doing so, it gradually abandoned the traditional administrative and legal institutions and, thus, generated an improved theoretical legal status for the Jews. For example, in 1855, the medieval head-tax on non-believers was abolished. Shortly thereafter, the government removed from the local Islamic tribunals all the legal cases involving the Jews and placed them under the Consular Courts of foreign governments, according to the Law of the Capitulations as established by the Ottoman sultans in order to give Europeans extraterritorial rights. At the close of the century, even the formal discrimination against Jews had ended under British rule.

The Egyptian national movement was also affected through an interaction with European ideas. At its inception, this movement was not associated with pan-Islamic nationalism, but drew its inspiration from secular, liberal political thought. During the subsequent development of nationalism, several different ideas emerged as expressed by the various political parties. As always, this pluralism created an environment tolerant of Jewish rights and communal autonomy. In fact, the Egyptian national movement benefited by the talents of young Jews like James Sanua, 1839–1912, and the contributions of some Jewish bankers. Accordingly, the People's Party, the Umma, with the most positive program for the creation of a strictly Egyptian national consciousness, expressed its aims in its newspaper in March, 1907:

Al-Jaridah is a purely Egyptian paper which aims to defend Egyptian interests of all kinds . . . the paper will not distinguish or discriminate between religions or race.⁵

The ideas which came to Egypt in the wake of the French conquest also challenged the religious structure of the country. The French consciously tried to weaken the influence of religious education, custom, and law. After Napoleon left, Egyptian rulers continued to view European values as necessary for the improvement of their country. Mohammed Ali, 1805–1848, began sending Egyptians to Europe for their education, by-passing the local Islamic schools. Schisms developed between Muslim scholars who studied in France and those who received their training only in the traditional setting. Eventually, Egypt had a generation of leaders who had not received any training at al-Azhar, the most rigorous institution of Islamic study. In addition, many Jewish, Christian, and Muslim children went to progressive schools run by religions other than their

Jacob Landau, *Middle Eastern Themes* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), pp. 9–10.

P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 139.

5. Vatikiotis, *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

own. These connections fostered open relations at high levels of society.

The secularization of society and the quest for a "legal rational foundation" for politics contributed to the shift from the reform of traditional religious institutions to the questioning of their merit altogether. Individuals turned from religious beliefs and leaders to the secular state founded upon progressive European ideas. Some even considered Islamic culture as based on the Koran to be totally invalid. In this period of change and factionalization for Islam in Egypt, no monolithic force prevailed, at least in the urban centers, which was capable of sustaining the standard religious attitudes towards Jews.

These developments in society had a great effect on the opportunities open to them. For example, Sanua, representing a whole class of rich and well-known Jews who enjoyed high status, important connections and much influence, received an education in Europe from 1852–1855 that was sponsored by Prince Ahmad Pasha Yeken, the grandson of Mohammed Ali. Sanua, in turn, tutored the children of wealthy families, found acceptance in circles of army officers who led the Arabi Revolt in 1882, became a hero to Muslim college students, and achieved fame as a popular writer.⁶ By the 1920s many more individual Jews had made advances in Egyptian politics. A Jew was a member of the Egyptian delegation to London which negotiated the independence of Egypt, while another was Minister of the Treasury. Jews served in the House of Delegates, in the Senate, on various town councils and as clerks in the government. The lady-in-waiting to Queen Nazli (1919–1936), mother of King Faruk, (1936–1952), was also a Jewish woman from this class.

This period of rapid political, cultural, and social change was also a time of great technological and economic development. Those having the requisite technical skills necessary for the modernization of Egypt came from Europe. Many were Jews, who worked as bankers, manufacturers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, merchants, journalists and cotton producers. As foreigners they enjoyed special rights under the Capitulations. Reports confirm that, until 1951, the Jews contributed heavily to the economic prosperity of Egypt and did not suffer under any restrictions. Hence, reality, predicated upon what they offered to society, clashed with traditional Muslim values. Because of this conflict, also seen in Christian Europe, the Jews enjoyed a favorable position removed from the negative influence of the orthodox religion of the country.

III

By the 1930s the position of this Jewish elite began to deteriorate due to developing pressures within Egyptian society. A wholesale rejection of the European model was already evident, and the educated middle class

6. Irene L. Gendzier, *The Practical Visions of Ya'qub Sanu'* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 9.

became alienated from the liberal nationalist leadership. From 1930–1935, the king and his supporters undermined constitutional principles and kept liberal parties out of the normal channels of political activity. Some liberals, therefore, resorted to undemocratic means of extremist political expression while others abandoned the national issue by compromising themselves through their cooperation with the king and with Great Britain. Furthermore, once fascist ideology and violence successfully threatened Europe, liberal democratic institutions lost a great deal of their credibility in Egypt. Fascist and Nazi propaganda in Egypt continued to limit liberal influences on the political system. Finally, many Egyptian army officers began to show their sympathies for fascism as an expression of protest against the British control of Egypt. At this time, in the wake of the failure of the liberals, such extremist groups as the Muslim Brethren and Young Egypt gained the leadership roles.

With their political decline, liberals abandoned the secular thought of Europe, engaged in pious studies of Islamic heroes, and urged the people to believe in the superiority of Islam. This was accompanied by the end of Egypt's isolation from the Muslim world. The pan-Islamic nationalism of al-Azhar replaced the tolerant western nationalism of the liberals. In 1937, Egyptians began to participate in Arab conferences, to travel more frequently in other Arab countries, and to make the Pilgrimage to Mecca more often. These changes during the late 1930s hurt the position of the Jews because they undermined the secular liberalism upon which much of their acceptance was based and were accompanied by a resurgence of older and more hostile notions concerning the Jewish people.⁷

Economic stresses during the 1930s also threatened the toleration of the Jews. Although in the cities some progress had been made in establishing close contacts in the schools among upper class children of all faiths, rural youngsters failed to receive such enlightened exposure and remained subject to the traditional notions about Jews. These peasants, who, like their counterparts all over the world, had probably never met Jews but were trained to view them as inferior, migrated to the cities to look for work as economic opportunities declined in their villages. Unemployment continued to rise during the Depression, causing many technical college and university graduates, as well, to flood the urban labor markets. Thus, the factors which had caused the Jews to be accepted during the earlier period of economic expansion became a source of resentment for many who were now in closer proximity to them.

In the 1930s, Muslim classes developed the capacity to supplant the Jewish and foreign economic elite. Xenophobia burgeoned during the period and was directed even against those whose families had lived in Egypt for many years. Although the Nationality Law of 1929 granted Egyptian nationality to anyone born and residing in the country, adminis-

7. Vatikiotis, *Op. cit.*, pp. 315–342, 357, 442.

trators particularly given to anti-foreign sentiment refused to include Jews under the law's aegis. Most of the Jews had continued to reside in the country as foreigners and enjoyed the protection of foreign governments and Consular Tribunals, but once the government cancelled the Law of the Capitulations, in 1937, and then imposed nationality quotas on certain jobs, the Jews lost their privileges. As in European countries undergoing nationalistic upheavals at the end of the Middle Ages, the Jews of Egypt suffered a decline in status because of national rather than religious discrimination during the 1930s.

Yet, although certain deprivations were felt by them at this time, no official or popular action had been taken against them solely on religious grounds. The few sporadic incidents that did occur were simply the result of extreme economic and political tensions in the society. But, with the growth of the anti-foreign movement, ideas of toleration lost favor, and extremist groups began to express their affinity for both fascism and Islamic fanaticism. Still, although the Jews were disquieted by these developments, they were not yet concerned about any major threat.

IV

Agitation against the Jews over foreign issues is not enough to change governmental policy or the behavior patterns of a country. Therefore, despite the attention which the Palestinian Question received from groups like the Muslim Brethren, anti-Jewish expressions remained at a low level in Egypt from 1938–1948. In 1938, however, some groups began to agitate against the Jews for their alleged aid to the Zionists in Palestine. In July, 1939, the Jews of Egypt received their first warning against supporting Zionism. Yet, the very nature of this warning showed the Muslims to consider Zionism and Judaism to be potentially separate movements and thus provided a ready method for distinguishing the foreign Zionist threat from a particularly Egyptian threat. The Jews continued to feel secure in Egypt, paying no attention to these peripheral events. Personal connections with Muslims were maintained as usual and most Jews did not perceive the possibility that tensions would reach serious proportions. At this time foreign observers noted that:

Until recently there was no specifically anti-Jewish, as distinct from the general anti-foreign feeling . . . even the uproar over Palestine did not at first affect their daily lives.⁸

On Balfour Day, 1945, the first modern-day Muslim riots against the Jews of Egypt broke out in Cairo. Young Egypt had been active for twelve years, yet, only in 1945 did it mount an attack against the Jews. Soon this became a general riot against all shops and people in western clothing, including Muslims. Even at the end of the Second World War intense acts of hostility exclusively directed against the Jews had yet to become a reality

8. Siegfried Lanshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1950), pp. 3–41.

in Egypt. Two years later, in 1947, anti-Semitism had not yet become part of Egyptian national life and policy. This was evidenced in the speech of Haykal Pasha, the Egyptian delegate to the United Nations on November 24, which offered Arab commitment to protection of the Jewish community while criticizing the plan to establish a Jewish state in Palestine:

The Arab governments will do everything in their power to protect Jewish citizens in their lands . . . Unconsciously you are on the verge of lighting a flame of anti-Semitism in the Middle East which would be more difficult to extinguish than it was in Germany.⁹

Yet Pasha was wrong in his predictions concerning the repercussions of the creation of the Jewish state, for the United Nations vote in that month and even the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel in May of 1948 passed without popular outbursts against local Jews. In April, 1948, when the Alexandrian Police Force went out on strike, leaving no authority in control, despite several years of agitation by Muslim extremists, the masses did not use this as an opportunity to harass the Jews, as might be expected. No massive exhibitions of violence erupted against the Jewish community in Egypt until five weeks after the invasion of Israel by the Egyptian Army.

V

These sudden demonstrations against the Jews in July of 1948 were a function of official Egyptian governmental policy in executing the war. The war had gone badly for the Egyptians, yet they claimed victory. Both the attack on Cairo by an Israeli bomber on July 16 and the truce with Israel that month, however, could not be explained in terms of the previous combat reports. Moreover, once the news of the losses reached the masses, a general reaction of sedition against the government would have been possible in the absence of some method of deflecting the concomitant national disgrace. To attribute Egypt's failure to a world conspiracy, the leaders felt, would also relieve them of the burden of explaining the defeat by Israel. The Jews who remained in Egypt were constant reminders of it. This feeling of shame and defeat elicited a change in the thinking of military leaders, a fact of particular importance when they took over the country in 1952.

Before the establishment of the Jewish state, the Arabs claimed that Zionism and Jewish immigration were an affront to the rights of Arabs in Palestine; anti-Semitism was not an essential aspect of those assertions. After the inception of the Israeli state, however, the developing ideologization of anti-Semitism functioned chiefly as a political weapon against the new state. According to the logic of this new anti-Semitism, persons living in Israel and, thus, the state itself, would be worthy of destruction if

9. Ibid. p. 33

it could be demonstrated that those who supported it were inherently evil. The government of Egypt further sought to discredit the Jewish people in order to diminish their ability to help Israel. Egyptians felt that any decline in Jewish prestige would help to undermine the Zionist state. Thus, it is clear that Egyptian anti-Semitism is not a primary cause of the Egyptian position towards Israel, but, rather, simply a convenient tool in the national opposition to the new state. Therefore, while anti-Semitism became a major factor in Egyptian thinking at this time, Egyptians did not primarily intend specific harm against the Jews of Egypt. Indeed, the government tried to exhibit some care for them from 1951–1953. Nevertheless, when the Egyptians failed to achieve their goal of eradicating the Jewish state, their frustration was unleashed upon the Jews of their own country. Ironically, most of Egypt's Jews fled, settling in Israel, contributing to its welfare, and battling against their former homeland.¹⁰

VI

After the trauma of the severe losses suffered by the Muslims at the hands of the Zionists, the traditional view of the Jews as weak and inferior became impossible to retain, and new, even more hostile, conceptions of the Jews were invoked. The acceptance of such newer views—specifically ones of Jewish demonic capabilities—demonstrates a radical departure from the development of Islamic feeling about the Jews.

The Egyptians found it necessary to muster anti-Semitic material from many foreign sectors. During the 1960s, when the Catholic Church attempted to exonerate the Jews for the killing of Jesus, the Muslims, of all peoples, advocated the traditional Catholic view that his death was part of an eternal Jewish conspiracy and that the motivation behind the Cardinals' decision was a Zionist plot. The ritual use of human blood, another popular Christian anti-Semitic claim, rarely found in Muslim lands and now thoroughly discredited everywhere, was recently reactivated by the Muslims. The depiction of this custom by the press created a demonic image of the Jew, different from and more sinister than the customary picture of the Jew as an obsequious second class citizen.

The Muslims also adapted ideas from modern secular western anti-Semitic literature. In addition, the European canard that Freemasonry is a Jewish conspiracy, based on the Kabbalah and aimed at other religions, appeared in Egyptian books.

The greater part of recent Egyptian literature dealing with Jews draws heavily upon the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Textbooks are filled with references to the Jews as spies, embezzlers, bank owners, and journalists, and the government printed several editions of the *Protocols* in Arabic, English, and French, selling copies to the Palestine Liberation

10. Yehoshafat Harkaby, *Emdat ha-Arviim be Sikhsukh Yisrael-Arav* (Tel-Aviv: D'vir, 1968), pp. 203ff.

—, *"Ha-anti-Shemiut ha-Arviit," Bayn Yisrael le-Arav* (Tel-Aviv: Zahal, 1965).

Organization—many apparently intended for world distribution. Nasser and Sadat cited the *Protocols* in their speeches. The descriptions of alleged plans for world domination by the Jews found in the *Protocols* served as a justification for the pogroms in Russia and the Holocaust in Germany, according to Norman Cohn; in Egypt, on the other hand, the Zionists were considered to be behind the *Protocols*, thus justifying equivalently hostile feelings towards the Zionists of the world.¹¹

Another significant component of the anti-Semitic ideology in Egypt was a new emphasis upon the occasional adverse aspects of ancient Islamic views about the Jews. These texts, though always available, were ordinarily disregarded and reflected only the mind of the infrequent persons who circulated them. After catastrophic military defeats by Israel, these obscure traditions received new importance as Egyptians attempted to find historical precedents for the conception of the Jew as a vicious enemy and to claim continuity in Jewish characteristics since the time of Mohammed. For example, various works described the Jews as having tried to kill Mohammed. Recent authors removed these rarely mentioned ideas from their original contexts, magnified them dramatically, and used them to perpetuate the new ideology through books, pictures, songs, and television. Religious rationales for killing Jews were found in Islamic literature; Haman's plot to annihilate the Jews, for example, was viewed as a proper response since he was a descendant of Amalek whom the Jews had supposedly vowed to exterminate. The modern Jewish woman soldier in Israel is also depicted as the same Jewish woman who once tried to betray Mohammed. The Egyptians synthesized obscure texts with the foreign anti-Semitic concepts which they imported in order to add the aura of tradition and legitimacy to the newer ideas, since the standard view of the Jews as simply inferior was no longer applicable to their needs.¹²

Conclusion

Egyptian contempt for Israel stems more from its being a nearby threat than from the Jewish character of the state. The animosity of Egyptian leaders towards their own Jews was only an indirect, perhaps unintended, result of their campaign against Judaism in order to undermine the Jewish state. The great intensity of this anti-Semitism results from traumatic Egyptian losses during the War of 1948 and not from the earlier activities of the Zionists in Palestine. After suffering such losses at the hands of a people who were considered weak, it was necessary for Egyptian leaders to replace, perhaps unconsciously, the traditional Islamic opinion about the Jews with one radically more hostile. Moreover, as the State of Israel prospered, these leaders became more dedicated to the

11. Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

12. Moshe Ma-oz, *Sinat ha-Yehudim be-Sifrut u'Bekhlai ha-Tikshoret ha-'Arvim* (Jerusalem: Ha-hug Leyidi'ot Am Yisrael Betefuzot Bebeyt Nasi Ha-medina, 1975) pp. 13, 19, 23–24, 30.

encouragement of anti-Semitism. They thus translated their feelings of national inadequacy into a particularly virulent form of religious hatred. This has had wider implications as many Egyptians, and people throughout the world, have begun to accept this new ideology as not only an accurate reflection of reality but also of traditional Islamic belief.

Consideration for peace in the Middle East must include a recognition of the nature of this anti-Semitism which has developed comparatively recently in Egypt with official encouragement. As recently as the summer of 1977, a government-owned weekly magazine, *October*, published a serialized Arabic version of an old French book called *The Evil Found in the Talmud*, complete with graphic descriptions of Jewish blood rituals and grotesque drawings of evil-eyed characters wielding long daggers. This fiction, imported from Europe and spread by overzealous official propagandists, hardly seems a result of deep rooted popular agitation in view of the spontaneous welcome the first Israelis received in Cairo. That massive outpouring of emotion showed that the conflict is between ideologies and not people. In fact, the present level of anti-Semitism is still unstable and subject to such turnabouts as the participation of an Egyptian ambassador in a Hanukkah celebration in New York.

The states of euphoria which accompanied each diplomatic breakthrough—Egypt's recognition of Israel and Israel's willingness to compromise—have offset some of the anger due to the earlier Egyptian setbacks. As Egypt ends her desire to annihilate Israel, anti-Semitism should cease to be a political weapon against the Jewish State. Government efforts must then turn to presenting Jews in a favorable light in order to help eradicate the image of them which has developed over the last three decades, especially since their departure. By encouraging contacts between her own population and Jews, particularly Israelis, Egypt could help to re-establish warm feelings between the two peoples. There might then be the renewed presence of Jewish residents in Egypt as well as the frequent visitors who could be Israeli academicians, religious leaders, tourists, or business people. Egypt began this process by inviting her former Jewish residents to return, by interviewing Jewish visitors on television and in the newspaper, and by entertaining Israelis at important social gatherings. Israelis cannot wait only for Egyptian overtures for personal contact; they, too, will have to initiate similar exchanges. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how quickly the hostility will be forgotten. The problem must be approached by the leaders of both countries if they are to establish the trust necessary to insure a lasting peace.

God The Mourner—Israel's Companion In Tragedy

MELVIN JAY GLATT

A Legend

THE TALMUD (BERAKHOT 3a) RELATES AN *aggadah* in which Rabbi Jose entered a Jerusalem ruin to pray. The reason he went into such a deserted place was his fear of being waylaid by evil-minded persons during the course of his prayers. In addition to his petitional encounter with God, Rabbi Jose also enjoyed an unexpected meeting with Elijah the prophet, who posed two questions to him. One, why he choose to pray in a ruin. Two, what he had heard while inside the ruin. The answer to the first question was Rabbi Jose's fear of being attacked by highwaymen. The answer to the second question was as follows:

I heard a *bat-kol* (voice) cooing like a dove and saying: "Woe to My children because of whose sins I destroyed My house and burned My sanctuary, and them I exiled among the nations."

Elijah, hearing this response of Rabbi Jose, retorted with his own explanation of the strange phenomenon inside the ruin:

By your life, that happening was not an isolated event. Each day at three separate intervals the same thing takes place. More than that. Whenever Israelites enter Synagogues and Houses of Study and say the refrain of "May His great Name be Blessed," the Holy One, Blessed be He, says: "Happy is the King who is thus praised in his palace. Woe to the father who exiled his children, and woe to those children who were banished from the table of their father."

A Special Genre of Aggadah

The above legend articulates a curious depiction of God that is found in several places in Midrashic literature. The image is of God as mourner and the theme is His bereavement over the destruction of the Holy Temple, Israel's loss of its national autonomy, and its consequent dispersion. The *aggadot* which deal with this image and theme constitute a unique genre of rabbinic legend that is highly artistic, with abundant anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity that reach extreme and straining limits. Within this aggadic typology God is portrayed as lamenting,

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crying, shedding bitter tears, moaning, mourning, and feeling pangs of guilt because of His harsh decrees against Israel.

Lamentations 1:16 reads:

For these things I weep;
My eye, my eye runs down with water;
... My children are desolate,
Because the enemy has prevailed.

There is no doubt that on the *peshat*, or literal level, the speaker of this sentence was a human eye-witness to Israel's misfortunes at the time of the First Destruction (c. 586 B.C.E.). In the hands of later Midrashic sages, however, the verse is put on an interpretative level (*d'rash*) with the speaker of the sentence being God Himself. It is *He* who weeps and it is *His* eyes that brim over with tears. What is the reason for such Divine bereavement? According to the Midrash, which has moved the whole verse context ahead in time to the period of the destruction of the Second Commonwealth (70 C.E.), Vespasian was transporting three ships of eminent Jerusalem citizens to Rome, with the intention of placing them in brothels for perverted sexual practices. Knowing their destination and the fate in store for them, the Jerusalemites decided to take their own lives rather than submit to immorality. In three successive groups the prisoners threw themselves into the turbulent sea and perished. At that moment the Holy Spirit cried out:

For these things I weep;
My eye, my eye runs down with water;
... My children are desolate,
Because the enemy has prevailed.¹

In another instance, the Midrash depicts the following scenario in the valley of Beth Rimmon. Hadrian commands the captain of his army, "By the time I eat this slice of cake and the leg of this fowl, I do not want a single Jewish person here to be found alive!" The captain surrounds the Jews with his legions, annihilating them, so that their blood streams to the coast and stains the sea as far as Cyprus. The Holy Spirit, witness to this atrocity, cries out in an agonizing lament:

For these things I weep:
My eye, my eye runs down with water;
... My children are desolate,
Because the enemy has prevailed.²

According to still another Midrashic account, Trajan's wife gave birth to a child on the ninth of Av according to the Hebrew calendar. The Jews,

1. *The Midrash*. (London: The Soncino Press, 1939), *Lamentations*. pp. 124-125.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

of course, were marking that day with their customary rituals of sadness over the destruction of the First Temple. With the passage of some months Trajan's child died, and the time of its demise coincided with Hanukkah. Though aware of possible grave consequences, the Jews decided to observe that particular holiday in usual joyous fashion by the lighting of festive candles. They were soon made to pay dearly for that action. Collaborators with the Romans said to Trajan's wife, "When your child was born the Jews mourned and when it died they kindled festive lights." The distraught woman appealed to her husband to take vengeance on the Jews. He speedily did so and ordered his legions to kill first a group of Jewish men and then their wives. The blood of the slain men and women mixed together and flowed out to the sea. Instantaneously the Holy Spirit cried forth:

For these things I weep;
My eye, my eye runs down with water;
... My children are desolate,
Because the enemy has prevailed.³

God's Mournful Behavior

The aggadic genre which depicts God as mourner describes more than His weeping and shedding tears over calamitous events in His people's history. Through the use of artistic hyperbole, daring anthropomorphisms, and malleable Biblical texts, this special Midrashic modality portrays a God who has taken on many a behavioral pattern characteristic of a person in deep grief. God is traumatized by His people's sufferings and He desires that His own behavior reflect various mourning practices, rites, and symbolic acts.

Rabbi Nahman reported that Samuel said in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi: The Holy One, blessed be He, summoned the ministering angels and said to them, "If a human King had a son who died and he mourns for him, what is it necessary for him to do?" They replied, "He hangs sackcloth over his door." He said to them, "I will do likewise." That is what is written: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (Isaiah 50:3).

"What does a human King do when mourning?" He asked again. They replied, "He extinguishes the lamps." He said to them, "I will do likewise." So it is stated: "The sun and the moon are become black, and the stars withdraw their shining" (Joel 4:15).

"What does a human King do?" He queried once more. They replied, "He walks barefoot." He said to them, "I will do likewise." Thus it says: "The Lord, in the whirlwind and in the storm is His way, and clouds are the dust of His feet" (Nahum 1:3).

3. Ibid., p. 127.

Once more He questioned: "What does a human King do?" They answered, "He sits in silence." He said to them, "I will do likewise." So Scripture states: "He sits alone and keeps silence" (Lamentations 3:28).

Again a question came: "What does a human King do when mourning?" They responded, "He sits and weeps." He said to them, "I will do likewise." So it is written: "And in that day did the Lord God, the God of hosts, call to weeping, and to lamentation, and to baldness" (Isaiah 22:12).⁴

The famous verse of lamentation uttered by the exiles being carried off to Babylon after the First Commonwealth's destruction, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning" (Psalm 137:5), was changed, through Midrashic malleability into a Divine, rather than human, outcry of sadness.

It goes without saying that all of us are required to have the destruction of the Temple in our memories forever. For even the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning."⁵

In similar fashion, the oft-quoted verse "Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4), without question an articulation of God's protection, was recast by the Midrash into an expression of God's mourning. The thrust of the aggadist was that God was, as it were, unable to sleep or even to doze off for some brief moments. And why? Because He was a mourner pondering over tragedy, and to one in the throes of such deep grief not even a moment of slumber can come as a relief.

You, the community of Israel, weep in the night, as Scripture states: "Weeping, she weeps in the night" (Lamentations 1:2), but I, says God, weep day and night. My presence knows no sleep, as it is said: "Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep."⁶

God's Need For Comfort

Within this special typology of *aggadot*, God is depicted as needing and soliciting comfort. Like the mourner who turns virtually anywhere for a word of uplift, a phrase of cheer, or a sentence of encouragement, God also searches for succor. Isaiah's magnificent expression of consolation, "Comfort yourselves, comfort yourselves, My people, saith your God" (40:1), is understood by the Midrash as God's plea to be comforted. *Naḥamu*, the imperative plural meaning "comfort!" is transformed by the Midrash into an injunction of God addressed to Israel that they comfort Him! "*Naḥmuni, naḥmuni, ami.*" "Comfort Me, comfort Me, My people!"

4. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

5. *Pesikta Rabbati* Tr. by William G. Braude, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), Vol. II, p. 562.

6. Ibid.

This shift of emphasis of Isaiah 40:1 is beautifully depicted by the Midrash through the following illustrations:

- a- If a King had a vineyard, and his enemies came into it and hacked at it and cut it down, who is to be offered comfort? The vineyard or the vineyard's owner? Is not the vineyard's owner to be comforted? The Holy One said, "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel" (Isaiah 5:7). He went on to say, "Who then requires comforting? Is it not I, the owner of the vineyard? Hence, comfort Me, comfort Me, My people!"⁷
- b- If a King had a flock of sheep, and wolves came at them and tore them apart, who should be comforted? The flock of sheep or the flock's owner? Is not the flock's owner to be comforted? The Holy One said, "You are My sheep, the sheep of My pasture" (Ezekiel 34:31). He went on to say, "Who then requires comforting? Is it not I, the master of the sheep? Hence, comfort Me, comfort Me, My people!"⁸

God's Sense Of Guilt

The most far-reaching and truly daring aspect of Midrashic transmutation found in the aggadic genre of God as mourner, is the portrayal of the Deity as overburdened with a sense of guilt. In the human arena, a mourner who is in the process of working through his grief often reflects on his own failings and shortcomings vis-à-vis the individual whom he mourns. In the aggadic typology being discussed here, God as mourner ruminates over His actions toward Israel and finds that there are aspects of His relationship with them for which He can blame Himself and call Himself to task.

The verse in Isaiah (22:4) "Look away from me, I will weep bitterly" is ascribed by the Midrash to God who, in addition to that lament, also says:

There is weeping below in My abode And there is weeping above in My very Presence Because I left My abode of which I once Said: "This is My resting place forever!" (Psalm 132:14)⁹

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "I watched carefully that My *Shechinah* should abide in the Temple forever. But then I burned My house, destroyed My city, exiled My children among the nations, and I sit solitary! Woe is Me!"¹⁰

The image of God in a mournful state of self-recrimination, guilt, and personal breast-beating is also articulated vividly in the following Midrashic selections:

Rabbi Johanan said: God may be compared to a King who had two sons. He

7. *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana* Tr. by William G. Braude and Israel Kapstein (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), p. 298.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Pesikta Rabbati*, Vol. II, p. 562.

10. *The Midrash. Lamentations*. p. 25.

became enraged against the first son, took a stick, thrashed him, drove him into banishment, and exclaimed, "Woe to him! From what ease he has been exiled!"

He later became enraged against the second son, took a stick, thrashed him, drove him into banishment, but then exclaimed, "The fault is with me since I must have brought them up in a bad fashion."

Similarly, when the Ten Tribes were exiled the Holy One, blessed be He, recited this verse over them: "Woe to them for they have strayed from Me" (Hosea 7:13). However, when Judah and Benjamin were exiled, the Holy One, blessed be He, declared: "Woe is to Me for My hurt" (Jeremiah 10:19). It is I who must have raised them poorly!"¹¹

Another Midrash in the same vein tells of a Sage who entered the ruined area of the Holy Temple and found there the only remaining wall of the entire Sanctuary area. The sight of the solitary wall motivated him to ask, "What is the distinctive feature of this wall that it alone of all the others still stands?" A passerby responded, "I will show you." Immediately, according to the Midrashic tale, the passerby took a ring and leveled it against the wall, whereupon an image of God appeared. He was standing and wailing over the destruction of the Temple, and over the exile of His people which had resulted from that calamity.¹²

A Suggested Interpretation

Like all aspects of Midrashic aggadah, this special genre of rabbinic legend, God as mourner, can be seen from several perspectives. Perhaps some of the Midrashic mentors were projecting their own challenges toward an omnipotent God through this medium. After all, He could have, but did not, lessen many of the calamities that befell His people. Perhaps this particular aggadic vehicle served as a forum for confronting God and saying, in effect: We, as a people, have been so smitten and have mourned so vociferously that we respectfully but determinedly want You to know what this pain is like!

Or, perhaps, this unique genre of aggadah sought to offer, though admittedly in an indirect manner, increased comfort to the Jewish people for many of the pains and tragedies of their history. For if their God mourned along with them, was that not proof that He was still close to them?

As a generalization, one finds two modalities of Midrashic thought which addressed themselves to Jewish collective suffering. One emphasized that such misfortunes stemmed from God's people having strayed from His path, so punitive measures were inflicted for this forfeiture of spiritual obligations. It was an old motif with its roots in the Bible. "For the Lord has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions"

11. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

12. *Tanna De-Bay Eliyahu*. Chapter 30.

(Lamentations 1:5). In rabbinic terminology the classic motif found expression as “And because of our sins we were exiled from our land.”

A second modality spoke in a different and far less recriminatory tone. In fact, if there was to be any recrimination at all, God took it upon Himself. He not only related to His people’s tragedies with empathy, but accepted on Himself a goodly amount of blame for this suffering. What is more, if He asked His people to repent for their share of failure in the God-Israel covenant relationship, He also felt guilt for having been uncompromising on His part.

Clinical research in our own time has provided us with new insights into the phenomenon of mourning and the psychology of the mourner. A salient feature of the mourning syndrome is the traumatized victim’s need for friends to share his/her grief. Such a companion who can overtly or symbolically cry with the person in distress helps the latter take the first steps toward emotional healing and psychological wholeness. David Dempsey underscores this point in his work, *The Way We Die*. “Probably the most effective therapy for the average person is contact with others who have experienced a similar loss.”¹³ David Hendin, in *Death As A Fact Of Life*, likewise emphasizes the desideratum of empathy for, and toward, the mourner. “The greatest danger of chemotherapy during bereavement, physicians point out, is that it is too easy for a doctor to say, ‘Here are your pills, goodbye,’ and not provide the most important of all therapies, understanding.”¹⁴ Dr. Phyllis Silverman, of Harvard Medical School’s Laboratory of Community Psychiatry, is responsible for starting a widow-to-widow program, which provides for recently bereaved women to be visited by others who have experienced similar trauma and emotional dysfunction stemming from the loss of a mate. The widow-to-widow program was

a result of finding in a pilot study that most people do not get close enough to someone in mourning, that the assistance they do offer is superficial and full of platitudes, and without real comprehension of what is needed to successfully cope and make the needed changes to build a new life.¹⁵

The destruction of the Holy Temple and the loss of national sovereignty in 70 C.E. were disasters of great magnitude to the Jewish people. In terms of what we understand today about disasters which involve the loss of almost total community¹⁶ the Jewish people at that time probably experienced collective psychic trauma as well as physical disruption and dislocation. The individual Jew, for certain, and the collective

13. David Dempsey, *The Way We Die* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975). Chapter VII, “We Who Mourn and Weep” p. 165.

14. David Hendin, *Death As A Fact Of Life* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1973), p. 184.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

16. See Kai T. Erikson, *Everything In Its Path: Destruction of Community In The Buffalo Creek Flood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976).

Jewish people, in all probability, needed emotional and psychological healing following the calamitous events of 70 C.E. Individually and unitedly, Jews were mourners. They mourned the loss of Sanctuary, national independence, and communality. In their condition they needed what we have come to recognize as an essential ingredient in the grief-to-renewal-process, namely, the companion in tragedy, the friend who empathizes with the bereaved by sharing the pain and shouldering the burden of loss.

In the case of the Jews their companion in tragedy was their own Deity. He who had always been the father of the orphan, the protector of the widow and the provider for the hungry became, through aggadic theological extensions, Israel's companion in mourning. "From the day that the Holy Temple was destroyed the Holy One, blessed be He, ceased to laugh."¹⁷ "From the moment of Jerusalem's destruction and the razing of the Holy Temple, there was to be no enjoyment for God, until such time as He would rebuild Jerusalem and return Israel to her midst."¹⁸ What the individual human companion in tragedy is to the mourner on a one-to-one basis, the God of Israel became to the Jews, singularly and collectively. An entire people in a virtual state of grief saw in their God a companion in tragedy, and from that empathetic relationship came the first groping steps toward emotional and psychological renewal.

The classic Sages who were responsible for the development of this aggadic theological modality were not therapists as we understand that term today. However, they intuitively sensed the emotional scars and the consequent needs of their Jewish people. A significant portion of Midrashic literature as it has come down to us is reflective of how the classic mentors addressed themselves to those psychological needs. Within that framework the unique genre of aggadah, God as mourner, found its due place. What we can appreciate about that special typology of aggadah is this: that beyond the fanciful imagery and its anthropomorphism which almost staggers our minds, the God-as-mourner theme provided a disrupted people with one of the most psychologically helpful mechanisms for those in the throes of the grief-to-healing process, the companion in tragedy.

The Midrashic teachers whose intuitions about the emotional needs of a grief-stricken people led them to develop from Biblical roots the theme of God as mourner, merit our deep respect and admiration.

17. *Avodah Zarah* 3b.

18. *Yalkut Shimoni*. Vol. II "Lamentations." Comment תהלת.

Priorities in Zedakah and Their Implications

TZVI MARX

AS CENTRAL TO THEIR IDENTITY, THE Jewish people pride themselves on their descent from Abraham. Abraham man is characterized by his acceptance of responsibility for the unfortunate, weak and helpless in his society.¹ He does not turn their helplessness into an accusation against them or against God, but sees in it a challenge to the development of his own moral character.

Thus, Maimonides, relying on Rabbi Assi (*Baba Batra* 6a) reports that “we are duty bound to observe the *mizvah* of *zedakah* more than all other positive commandments.”² Taking this injunction seriously means translating its claim into a practical program of application and administration. What kind of principles, then, are invoked in the Talmudic-halakhic tradition to establish a system of priorities to further this end?

Two critical variables interact in the halakhic development of these priorities: the needs of the client³ and the resources of the benefactors.⁴ The very word for a welfare client in Scripture is *evyon*, which the *Midrash Rabba* explains as “one who needs” (*ta’ev lekhol davar*).⁵ His needs include not only the objective minimum that any person would require to sustain body and soul, but, also, the subjective idiosyncratic, individualistic demands of his personality, the satisfaction of which are deeply connected with his sense of wellbeing and self-respect.

The pressures which attend the welfare distribution process derive, to a large extent, from the very limitedness of scant resources which have to satisfy a seemingly unlimited demand. “The poor shall not disappear

1. *Midrash Shoher Tov* on *Proverbs* 14. “Great is *zedakah* that through it Abraham is praised, David is praised and Israel is praised.”

2. *Yad Hazakah Hilkhoh Matnat Aniym* (Laws of Charity) 10:1.

3. Deut. 15:8, “Thou shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he lacks.” See *Ketubot* 67b for the exegesis of this verse.

4. Rambam, *Yad, Hilkhoh Matnat Aniym* 7:1 and 7:5. Also *Ketubot* 67b, “It was ordained at Usha that if a man wishes to spend liberally he should not spend more than a fifth.”

5. *Leviticus Rabbah*, 34:6. Commenting on the verse in Lev. 25:25, “If thy brother be waxen poor.” “Eight designations were given to the poor man; *ani*, *evyon*, *mishken*, *rash*, *dal*, *dak*, *mak*, *helek* . . . He is called *evyon* because he longs (*meta’ev*) for everything . . .” The highly varied terminology employed by Scripture in referring to the poor man is taken by the Midrash as indicative of an awareness of the complex dimension of the poverty experience. This complexity lies both between different kinds of poor and within the individual. Poverty is not a melting pot which makes all of suffering humanity similar, but a steaming cauldron of conflict and divisiveness.

from the land" (Deut. 15:11), seen as a judgment upon all human efforts to eliminate poverty, adds a Promethean dimension to the endless struggle to overcome this societal malaise.

How does one rationalize the process of distribution under conditions of limitation? What principles can be invoked to organize the competition of demand and to respond morally to conflicting entreaties within the constraints of limited supply? The encounter with poverty and anguish is an incentive to the potential benefactor to abandon the effort as he becomes aware of the enormity of the problem and of his innate helplessness to respond as completely as necessary. His capacity to solve the social problems that challenge him is always attended by a sense of his own inadequacy and impotence and he is tempted to abandon the option of even partial solutions.⁶

Dealing with this sense of inadequacy of the benefactors, individually and/or communally, is one of the considerations that enters into the formulation of specific guidelines in the halakhic approach. Guidelines, halakhot, help us to defuse the tendency toward all-or-nothing reactions when we are faced with seemingly insoluble problems. One of the paradoxes of Jewish history is the ability of the Jewish people to live in the embraces of prophetic and messianic absolutes while yet endorsing grossly imperfect, though achievable and temporal, goals.

One might characterize the relationship between *Mikrah* (Scripture) and *Talmud*, between *Torah Shebikhtav* (written Torah) and *Torah Sheb'al Peh* (Oral Torah) as a wedding of this tension between the sought after dream and the commitment to the possible. The great prophetic visions of the turbulent streams of righteousness, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness (*zedakah*) like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24) are funneled, in this wedding, through the sieves of reality into the possible. The Talmud recommends that: "One must not give the wandering poor man less than a loaf worth a *pondion*"⁷ at a time when four *se'ahs* (of wheat) cost one *sela*.⁸ So, then, the poor wanderer got a liter's volume of bread as assistance during the period of the Mishnah. It is thus that the Scriptural "mighty stream of righteousness" has been converted into about one and a half pounds of bread.⁹ To experience the "mighty stream of righteousness" in a loaf that is given to a hungry man is a testimony to the success of a very special kind of moral education which, upon large canvasses of human perfection, can sketch scenes and visions of deeply inspired ideals, while using very small strokes of the moral brush mixed with imperfect hues and shades each eminently reproducible. The "small stroke"

6. *Ethics of the Fathers* 2:16. Rabbi Tarfon asserts that the awareness that one cannot achieve everything cannot be allowed to paralyze us from doing that which is possible.

7. Roman coin equal to a half zuz or two issars. In contemporary value, about IL 1.60.

8. A *sela* equals 48 *pondions*; and a *se'ah* is 13.184 liter by volume. Thus, a loaf worth a *pondion* (1.60 Israeli lira) when four *se'ah* (55 liters) of wheat cost one *sela* (76.80 Israeli liras) amounts to a quantity of bread which was baked using 1.2 liters of wheat (approximately 1½ lbs.)

9. *Mishnah Peah* 8:7. Soncino tr., p. 44.

metaphor of the halakhic outlook in the laws of *zedakah* thus finds its application by taking into account not only the needs of the indigent but the capacities of the benefactors as well.

One principle of dealing with the competition of demand for welfare assistance asserts that the priority is proportional to the degree of need. A more helpless person has priority over a less helpless one, even though both make legitimate requests. The prototypical welfare client in the Talmudic arena is the orphan, the *yatom*. When competing with his feminine counterpart, the *yetomah*, he discovers that the Talmud prescribes prior assistance to her because she is more helpless than he.

Our rabbis taught: If an orphan boy and an orphan girl applied for maintenance (*lehitparnes*), the girl is to be maintained first and the boy afterwards because it is not unusual for a man to go begging but it is unusual for a woman to do so.¹⁰

Were there sufficient resources available to satisfy both, the boy orphan would not be refused his needs from the *kuppah* (community chest). Obviously, sending him out to beg from door to door just because it is easier for him than for her is not an ideal solution, nor is it particularly compatible with the sublime ideal of human dignity. However, it provides an operational level of moral achievement which makes it possible to administer an undersupplied community chest.

How are needs rated in terms of their urgency and intensity? Do economic categories provide a sufficient terminology and insight into human needs? Some elaboration of this problem can be discerned from the continued Talmudic discussion concerning boy and girl orphans. In the halakhic framework, marital needs are placed on a par with economic ones (*parnassah*). In the competition to satisfy this emotional need, the community is enjoined to apply the same principle of greater helplessness. Here, too, the female orphan takes precedence over her male counterpart.

If an orphan boy and an orphan girl applied for a marriage grant, the girl orphan is to be enabled to marry first and the boy orphan is married afterwards, because the shame (*bushah*) of a woman is greater than that of a man.¹¹

In connection with this halakhah, we are immediately told that

Our rabbis taught: If an orphan applied for assistance to marry, a house must be rented for him, a bed must be prepared for him and he must also be supplied with all household objects required for his use, and then he is given a wife in marriage . . .¹²

10. *Ket.* 67a., Soncino tr., p. 409.

11. *Ket.* 67b., Soncino, tr., p. 410.

12. *Ket.* 67a., Soncino tr., p. 409.

In view of his apparently greater economic pressure, insofar as he has to be provided with housing and furniture, as well as wedding expenses, one can well ask: why does she take precedence?

The Talmud here enlarges the notion of helplessness to include the loss of self-esteem at being unmarried. *Bushah* is experienced by both the single man and the single woman who have reached marriageable age, but her *bushah* is markedly greater and this warrants extending assistance to her first. Whether the reality of losing face is understood in sociological-psychological-empirical terms as reflecting the state of social values during the Talmudic period, or in existential terms as a permanent feature of the general feminine personality, is not the issue in this discussion. What is relevant is the fact that a non-economic variable of deprivation is taken seriously in the welfare equation.

The sensitivity inherent in such an inclusion raises the question of the very nature of the *zedakah* response. Economic deprivation does not exhaust the considerations which have to be responded to in welfare systems. The non-quantifiable variable of *bushah*—loss of self esteem due to the inability of an individual to meet the social demands of a particular social system which placed marriage at the pinnacle of its social and religious values—is equally important.

The variable of *bushah* challenges us to realize that efforts at simplification in the realm of suffering should be tempered with a profound awareness of the complexity of this experience. One cannot really translate suffering into quantitative monetary terms even though efforts to alleviate suffering and deprivation are, to a large extent, dealt with in that way.

Just as *zedakah* deepens my awareness of the vertical dimension of another's experience, so, too, does it educate me to enlarge my "I" consciousness in a horizontal direction. The enterprise of *zedakah* can be better understood if one recognizes how deeply it is rooted in the experience of *zibbur*-community. To feel the obligation of *zedakah* is to realize that I belong to others as others belong to me. It is to experience the emotion of communal identity. To be a Jew in light of the *mizvah* of *zedakah* is to respond to the invitation to meet face to face another human being and to realize that how it goes for him makes a difference in my own self-concept. I cannot ignore the human traffic that crosses my threshold of sympathy. I must extend the leads of my identity and concern to encompass the other in an awareness that my "I" is impoverished if it cannot bridge this moral space. "If I am only for myself, what am I?" The "what am I" challenge of *zedakah* is compounded by another, perhaps more difficult question: whom am I to meet, whom am I to encounter when I participate in the challenge?

The Talmud states, in the name of R. Hiyya b. Abin:

R. Johanan pointed out that it is written (Proverbs 19:17) "but righteous-

ness (*zedakah*) delivers from death . . .” [W]hat kind of charity delivers a man from an unnatural death? When a man gives without knowing to whom he gives and the beggar receives without knowing from whom he receives.¹³

If *zedakah* is an invitation to become aware of another human being while, at the same time, both the donor and receiver are to remain faceless, what aspect of the other am I engaging? Does the needy person to whom I offer assistance have a personality, or am I to see him as a faceless creature whose needs I estimate in terms of the average or normal “poor person?”

The halakhah does differentiate the poor into distinct groups for assistance purposes and recognizes distinguishing features which cut through the fog of total anonymity. The suffering female orphan, with respect to her specific feminine anguish of *bushah*, compels me to think of the poor in two classes, male and female. Even so, when I help her first, it is not necessarily her specific need that I am trying to satisfy, but her need as an average *yetomah*.

One senses here a dilemma posed by specificity. The halakhah wants me to meet the person in his human condition. How else can I be responsive? It is the human in him that arouses the human in me. My identification is all the more pronounced to the degree that I can make out the particularity of that person in need. But, yet, the experienced indignity of the pauper through his dependency on charity secures a claim for anonymity.

There is still another factor supporting the response to facelessness. The pauper has to ask himself how much belt tightening he must engage in as he faces me with his personal problem. He has to consider the consequences of thrusting himself, *in toto*, upon my benefactions. He may find me overwhelmed by his total need laid bare. By staying somewhat removed in his facelessness, he enables me to respond to the broad needs that he brings without feeling paralyzed by my inability to respond to the very ultimately particular coordinates of his poverty.

How far does the particularization of the pauper's needs go? Is it the ideal of *zedakah* to direct me to respond to the idiosyncratic person in “his” poverty with all the particularization that this entails? And, therefore, are his unique idiosyncratic needs legitimate claims upon me, limited only by my resources? Or can I claim that the pauper has a responsibility to formulate his needs in average and normal bounds, and that the state of poverty deprives him of his right to claim the luxury of particular satisfactions to which his particular way of life had accustomed him even though his deprivations now expose him to a very particular brand of suffering?

The Talmudic concern with this question¹⁴ is attached to the exegesis of the verses in Deuteronomy 15:8, “If there be among you a needy man . . . You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your needy

13. *Baba Batra* 10b, Soncino tr., p. 48.

14. *Ket.* 67b.

brother but you shall surely open your hand unto him and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wants"—and, in particular, to the meaning of the latter phrase: *Dai mahsoro asher yehsar lo*. *Dai mahsoro* "sufficient for his need" is taken to suggest that we supply the basics which any person in his position of poverty would need. *Asher yehsar lo*—"in that which he wants" is taken to extend our responsibility even to his particular needs. The emphasis is on the word *lo*—what is lacking "to him." This exegesis asserts two legitimate claims by the pauper, his objective-normal as well as his subjective-idiosyncratic needs.

The weight of the discussion in Talmud *Ketubot* 67–68, lends support to the validity of particularity in poverty.¹⁵ However, as is typical when complex issues are discussed there, dissenting opinions are recorded. In one case, a pauper responds to R. Nehemiah's question about his dietary needs, and indicates that he was accustomed to tender meat and old wine. R. Nehemiah invites him to share his rough fare of lentils, subsequent to which the poor man dies, apparently as a result of this abuse of his sensitive digestive system. The anonymous judgment recorded in the Talmud is that the poor beggar should not have indulged himself with such refined dietary habits. The rejection of guilt on the part of R. Nehemiah suggests that the anonymous Amora holds it to be the responsibility of a benefactor to provide average needs, in this case victuals, and not more. R. Nehemiah is, therefore, held blameless, and the very particular biographical history of the pauper is irrelevant.

The Talmudic commentator, Me'iri of Perpignan (1249–1306), takes such a restricted approach to the particular wants of the needy that he interprets the Talmudic discussion which is supportive of those needs to refer only to situations that are very acute, viz., sickness.¹⁶

In this view, only sickness or some such similar generally understood and clearly discernible objective particularity entitles the pauper to special treatment. Sickness can be contracted by anyone and, while it strikes only in particular cases, it is understood as something that can be applicable to anyone. It is a type of particularity which has a general ring about it. Its non-universality is only a matter of coincidence, not of essence. By contrast, the particularity of a given poor man which could apply only to him

15. Anecdotes illustrating the emphasis on satisfying *his* needs as an ideal are cited: The story of Hillel who personally ran before the horse of a poor man who could not find a slave to run, as befitted his former status; the anecdote of the people of Upper Galilee who made extreme sacrifices to provide one poor beggar with expensive meat; Rava's apology to another poor man for suggesting that he temper his needs.

16. *Bet Habehirah* to *Ketubot* (Jerusalem, 5707), p. 288: "However as regards a healthy person, however much he is accustomed to better fare, one is not obligated to feed him other than how one feeds himself . . . by way of observation it is related of one who came to R. Nehemiah who asked him to what are you accustomed in food . . . he should not have accustomed himself to so much luxury." It is interesting to note that the standard of aid is "who he feeds himself," the style of the benefactor. Does he mean it as an approximate measure of the average person's fare or specifically as a function of the benefactor's living standard?

because of his own unique identity and being, this essentially subjective and idiosyncratic need is no grounds for special treatment and special response. The benefactors, individual or community, do not have to take in to account those kinds of claims which, in principle, could not have applied to others. In this frame of reference, priority given to the marriageable *yetomah* is a reflection of concern for general needs (though restricted to a particular group of unwed orphan girls) and does not reflect a trend toward subjective individualization of poverty claims. Sick-ness, like *bushah*, distinguishes a *class* of paupers. Hence, it becomes the grounds for valid relief. The Me'iri's point of view suggests that to legitimize the particular person-specific, biographically derived need systems within a welfare structure would create an inordinate magnitude of demand which could swamp the whole benefaction enterprise.

You get a flavor of this possibility in the Talmudic report of Rava's rough handling of one pauper's demand for fattened chicken and old wine as had been his style in better days. "*Lo hayashtah leduhka de zibbura?*—Don't you care about the pressure on the community (to satisfy this expensive need)?" An unlimited supply would make such a restriction irrelevant, but its cogency lies in the reality of communal limitations. Rava's ultimate apology to the pauper is in line with the mainstream tendency in the Talmudic discussion to subsidize even the individualistic and peculiar needs to the extent that resources permit.

We have here two models of welfare responses which have to relate to the urgency of particularity. One defines the ideal *zedakah* response in terms of the individual qua individual. Each pauper is a special case defined by his own history, temperament and habits. The other meets the pauper as a member of a class and relegates his individual needs to the needs of the subclass of those paupers who share that very need, i.e., there is a way to perceive his need as reflecting a more general mode of needs. In the latter view, to those needs which reflect the exclusive domain of needs of the claimant, the benefactor can remain indifferent. The degree of tolerable pressure on the community may be one element differentiating these views. Obviously, neither side can demand responses that are completely beyond the resources that are available.

Perhaps another element is even more crucial. The Me'iri's approach might withhold responses to absolute particularity even were resources unlimited. His ideal welfare structure that restricts individuality of need within class limitation makes it impossible for the pauper to feel that he can work out and express his entire (legitimate) life style within the framework of welfare dependency. He cannot be allowed to fall into the habit of organizing his life around his own helplessness. To know that his most personal mode of living can never be fulfilled within a welfare structure is an incentive to leave that structure and to relate to it as a transient. There is a built-in feature of frustration which serves to prevent the welfare client from idealizing poverty. When we consider the genera-

tion, by mass welfare systems, of those very dependencies, we can appreciate the concern here. The more liberal viewpoint cannot reconcile this harsh attitude with the ideal of compassionate *zedakah* and must seek the solution to the problem of habituation of dependency through other means.

Awareness of the possibilities for infantilization through the indulgence of dependency and through the loss of self-esteem is reflected in additional guidelines. From the point of view of the recipient, getting *zedakah* can easily be a degrading experience, with a severe loss of self-respect. This vulnerability is the root concern of additionally profound halakhot.

It is not necessary for the *ani* to verbalize his needs in *zedakah* categories in order to qualify for *zedakah*. The benefactor ought to try to comprehend the unspoken needs and respond to them, thereby maintaining the feeling of dignity of the poor person. Therefore, when possible, charity ought to be dispensed as a loan to maintain the facade of the self-sufficiency of the poor person, even though, in fact, repayment will not be demanded.¹⁷ This is a case where form determines content. This constitutes a constructive illusion which the poor person needs to believe in order to make his unfortunate dependency on others palatable.

In the same vein, and to the degree possible, *zedakah* is to be dispensed anonymously.¹⁸ What is really radical in the Talmudic sensitivity is its indulgence of the poor person to some degree of conspicuous consumption in order to help maintain his facade of self-sufficiency.¹⁹ We do not expect him to parade his indigence.

17. a. *Ket.* 67b. The disagreement between R. Meir and the Rabbis centers around the question of which technique of offering assistance is least likely to offend the dignity of the needy one.

b. Jerusalem Talmud, *Shekalim* 5:4: "Said R. Yonah: 'Praised is he who gives to the poor' is not written but 'Praised is he who is discerning (*maskil*) to the poor.' This refers to one who closely examines how to fulfill a *mizvah*. How did R. Jonah do? When he saw a previously wealthy poor man he would say to him: My son, I have heard that you have inherited some wealth. Take this loan now and you will repay me. After he took it he would tell him: It is a gift for you." The J. Talmudic commentary *Karban Ha'edah* (by David b. Naftali Fraenkel of Berlin 1704–1762) explains: "one who closely examines the *mizvah* of *zedakah*: how to do it so that the poor man is not embarrassed."

18. *Baba Batra* 9b: "R. Eleazar said; A man who gives in secret is greater than Moses our teacher." *Baba Batra* 10b: "R. Hiyya b. Abin said: R. Yohanan pointed out . . . What kind of charity is that which delivers man from an unnatural death? When a man gives without knowing to whom he gives and the beggar receives without knowing from whom he receives." See *Yad*, *Matnat Ani'im* 10:8 about levels of *zedakah*. See further, *Ket.* 67b for the extent to which Mar Ukba went to maintain his anonymity as a donor. Anonymity by the donor is an example of "better had a man throw himself into a fiery furnace than publicly put his neighbor to shame."

19. *Ket.* 67b. Another anecdote about Mar Ukba points out that he was not dissuaded from giving charity to a man who used to spray old wine as a deodorizer (expensive habit). In fact, he doubled the amount, realizing the poor fellow's delicate needs. Also see *Ket.* 68a, where the *ani* is not compelled to reduce himself to outright rags to qualify for *zedakah*. "He may not be compelled to sell his house or his articles of service." Also *Peah* 8:8: "We do not obligate him to sell his house or his utensils."

On the other hand, the benefactor is responsible for seeing that the *zedakah* funds do find their way to those who are legitimately entitled to them. To some degree, investigation and validation are called for.²⁰ How can this be reconciled with the desire for anonymity? The key word here is *discreet* investigation and supervision. An anecdote in *Ketubot* emphasizes this point. R. Abbah used to hang his charity funds in a sack slung over his back and from it the paupers would take their alms without his seeing them. But, reports the Talmud, he would cast discreet sideways glances to make sure that no imposter would take advantage of his benevolence. R. Meir ben Yaakov Hacohen Schiff (Frankfurt 1605–1641) comments here that, so long as the poor person is unaware that his authenticity is being validated, he suffers no loss of self-esteem.

This cultivation of sensitivities in our responses to others carries along with it the risk of being exploited. Openness to others does make one an easy mark. The Talmud avoids the romanticization of the pauper by not shirking the possibility that sympathy toward poverty invites exploitation which, in turn, can lead to harsh backlash by a once-burnt benefactor, and can easily become the rationalization for restraint even to legitimate demands.²¹ We find admonitions in the Talmud which speak against both alternatives: “If a man accepts charity and is not in need of it, his end will be that he will not pass out of the world before he comes to such a condition,” and “anyone who shuts his eyes against charity is like one who worships idols.”²²

Zedakah forces a man to see himself at his worst as well as at his best. The benefactor discovers his own capacity to ignore others, to be indifferent to their fates and to rationalize his indifference in respectable terms. That there are those who take advantage of our benevolent inclinations, the Talmud emphasizes, serves as an irresistible rationalization to curb this inclination in all events. The rogue out there helps to conceal the rogue within ourselves. On the other hand, the pauper discovers the tragic meaning of dependency on his fellow man in having to swallow his pride and conceal his real personality in asserting very limited claims. *Zedakah* reveals to him his own capacity for deceit to exploit the guilt and sympathy of his benefactor.

The dark side of man that is bared by the challenge of *zedakah* reveals

20. *Baba Batra* 9a, Soncino tr., p. 40, the discussion between R. Huna and R. Judah concerning the examination of applicants: “R. Huna said: applicants for food are examined but not applicants for clothes. . . . R. Judah, however, said: The applicants for clothes are to be examined but not applicants for food.”

21. a. *Ketubot* 68a, Soncino tr., p. 414. Following just such an abuse by a pauper, R. Eleazar is quoted as saying: “Come let us be grateful to the rogues for were it not for them we would have been sinning every day (by not responding to requests for charity).” The rogues legitimate the rationalization that the pauper is not authentically in need.

b. See Abraham Cronbach “*Me’il Zedakah*,” *HUCA* Vol. II, pp. 561–567, for a defense against these rationalizations and pretexts, esp. 563–4, the charge that the supplicants are imposters.

22. *Ket.* 68a, *Baba Batra* 10a.

also the greatness of the man who molds himself in the image of Abraham by reaching out to his fellow to alleviate his economic and spiritual suffering²³ with warmth and empathy. He emboldens the poor person to refrain from cynicism by standing with him in the hour of trial. *Zedakah* teaches that it is man-alone who becomes the destroyer,²⁴ but that man-together becomes the redeemer.²⁵

23. *Baba Batra* 9b. "R. Isaac also said: He who gives a small coin to a poor man obtains six blessings, and he who addresses him with words of comfort obtains eleven blessings." A handout is not enough; a heart out is the higher blessing.

24. *Midrash Zuta, Shin Hashirim* 1: "If the people of the generation of the flood and of Sodom observed *zedakah* they would not have been destroyed. Thus it is explained of Sodom that even though they committed many sins, their fate was not sealed but for their failure to do *zedakah*."

25. a. *Baba Batra* 10a. R. Judah says: Great is charity in that it brings the redemption nearer as it says, "Thus said the Lord, keep ye judgment and do righteousness (*zedakah*) for my salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed" (Jer. 16:5).

b. *Pesikta d'Rab Kahane* 22: "When the Messiah will appear he will be clothed in *zedakah*."

c. *Devarim Rabbah* 5:6: "If you would observe *zedakah* and Justice I would immediately bring you full redemption."

d. *Midrash Zuta Shir Hashirim* 1: "Whoso gives *zedakah* benefits not only himself but all creatures throughout the world."

Death Experiences in Rabbinic Literature

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IN RECENT YEARS STUDIES HAVE BEEN MADE of the clinical-death and the near-death experiences of individuals who were successfully resuscitated, experiences which apparently confirm the reality of consciousness, even in cases where clinical death has been diagnosed. Raymond A. Moody, distinguished student of this phenomenon, in a work entitled *Life After Life*, has described the experiences of individuals of divergent backgrounds who have been declared clinically dead or near death.¹ Moreover, he has cited parallels to these experiences in the New Testament,² Plato,³ the Tibetan Book of the Dead,⁴ and the writings of the Swedish mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg.⁵ While it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the validity of the evidence produced by students for the verification of life after death, it is interesting, in this connection, to cite some examples from Rabbinic literature which provide confirmation of the experiences recounted by latter day respondents, as reported by Prof. Moody.

Among the characteristics of the death experience listed by Prof. Moody are the following: the ineffability of the experience (p. 25), hearing the news of the demise (p. 26), the feelings of peace and quiet (p. 28), the noise or auditory sensations, both pleasant and unpleasant (p. 29), the feeling of passing through a dark tunnel (p. 30), the out-of-the-body sensations (p. 34), meeting others (p. 55), confronting the Being of light (p. 58), the review of one's life (p. 64), reaching a border or limit (p. 73), coming back (p. 77), telling others of the experience (p. 84), the effects on lives (p. 88), new views of death (p. 94), and corroboration by comparisons with the experiences of others that could not possibly be known through ordinary avenues of knowledge (p. 98).

A number of these features are paralleled in passages in Rabbinic literature which the reader may find significant as well as suggestive of the unity of human experience in reference to death. This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive study, but, rather, seeks to point out some of the salient features in Rabbinic writings that bear a resemblance to the reports of Dr. Moody's respondents.

1. Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life*, with a foreword by Elizabeth Kubler Ross, M.D. (New York: Bantam Books, by arrangement with Mockingbird Books, 1975). In condensed form in *Reader's Digest*, January 1977.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

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The phenomenon of ineffability refers to the fact that certain aspects of the experience undergone in dying cannot be described in words. This ineffability is confirmed by the Talmudic statement that no eye of prophet or sage has yet seen the world to come or can describe it; only God Himself knows that which is prepared for those who wait for Him.⁶ The actual descriptions reported by those who have “come back” could be simply a reinterpretation, in familiar terms, of what they believe has happened, but which cannot be described.

The reports of feelings of tranquillity and peacefulness experienced in the near-death state also have their parallels in Biblical and Rabbinic writings,⁷ while the apparently contrary phenomenon of roaring and banging that Dr. Moody reports as taking place at the time of death is also confirmed by the Talmud, which says that the noise of the soul departing from the body reverberates throughout the entire world.⁸ That heavenly music may be heard by some in the death-experience is likewise affirmed.⁹

Passing through a dark tunnel, an experience recounted by those who have gone through the near-death experience, has its parallel in the Talmudic account of *Gilgul Mehillot* (rolling through tunnels), which, according to a belief among Jews, will take place at the time of the resurrection. All bodies buried in the Diaspora will have to pass through tunnels or caves on the way to the land of Israel, there to be resurrected. While not identical, the near-death experience and this traditional belief have a certain correspondence. The Biblical “valley of darkness”¹¹ and the darkness described in the book of Job¹² may refer to this passage through a dark tunnel. Here, too, may be the reason for the fear of Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai about the path he would take after death.¹³

In the experience of an out-of-the-body existence the physical body is viewed from the outside. Thus, we find in the Talmud that Rav (Abba Arikha), the great Rabbinic authority of Babylonia, said to R. Samuel bar Shilat “Deliver a warm eulogy in my behalf, because I will be standing

6. *Berakhot* 34b, based on Isaiah 64:3; cf. *Zohar* III, 159b *et passim*. The experiences referred to in these sources are, of course, on far more exalted levels than those experienced in the clinical death and near-death state. Nevertheless, what is recorded by latter-day respondents may be understood as reflections of the more exalted order. [For other near-death experiences, see *Zohar* I, 217b ff.]

7. Isa. 57:2; cf. *Shabbat* 52b; *Midrash Aggadah*, Genesis (ed. Buber), p. 5a; *Zohar* I, 22b, and II, 200b.

8. *Yoma* 20a. According to *Yoma* 21a, the rabbis prayed with success for the elimination of this unbearable sound. The reference may be to an alleviation of the sound so as to make it bearable.

9. *Sanhedrin* 95b. The reference is to the death of the armies of Sennacherib. See *Life After Life*, p. 30.

10. *Ketubot* 111a.

11. *Ps.* 23:4, generally translated as the “valley of the shadow of death.” On the general significance of Psalm 23 and its reference to the afterlife, cf. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms* I, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1966), pp. 144 ff.

12. 10:21, 22.

13. *Berakhot* 28b.

there.”¹⁴ It is obvious that Rav meant that he would be standing on the outside and, as a spectator, would be observing what was taking place. The deceased is also said to hear discussions carried on in his presence.¹⁵

An awareness of what is happening to the body is also attributed to the soul. A passage in Job is cited in confirmation of the grief experienced by the soul over the decomposition of the body: “His flesh grieveth for him and his soul mourneth over him.”¹⁶ During the first twelve months after death, we are told, the body is still not completely decomposed and the soul leaves the body and comes back. Only at the end of that period does the soul take its final departure and no longer returns. These passages seem to indicate that although the soul is separated from the body, a relationship between the two still obtains until the state of total decomposition.¹⁷

The Talmud also states that the soul finds itself in a state of mourning for the body for a period of seven days. The story is recounted of a man in the vicinity of R. Judah who died and left no family, so R. Judah came with ten men to sit in the home of the deceased, probably conducting prayers there. After seven days the dead man appeared to R. Judah in a dream and said to him, “May you find tranquillity, just as you have brought tranquillity to me.”¹⁸ Apparently the concern of survivors about those who have died brings peace to them.¹⁹

The question was also raised as to how long the soul is aware of what is being said in the presence of the body. According to one opinion, the awareness continues only until the time of burial, while according to others it is until the flesh is decomposed.²⁰ Perhaps differences of personality and character determine this duration.

That the soul is met by familiar personalities is implied in such statements as the following: “I will explain the Mishnah in accordance with the opinion of R. Oshaya, so that when I die R. Oshaya will come forward to meet me.”²¹ Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai stated that when he was about to die, Hezekiah, King of Judah, was coming to meet him.²² There are also accounts of spiritual beings (angels) coming forth to welcome the souls of the righteous.²⁴ According to other Talmudic ac-

14. *Shabbat* 153a.

15. *Berakhot* 19a; *Shabbat* 152b.

16. *Berakhot* 18b. The verse is in Job 14:22. Cf. *Nishmat Hayyim* by R. Manasseh ben Israel, II, Chap. 24, and the various citations there.

17. *Shabbat* 152b. Cf. also *Nishmat Hayyim*, II, Chap. 22; R. Aaron Berekhiah of Modena, *Ma'avar Yabbok*, II, Chap. 4.

18. *Shabbat* 152b.

19. This is undoubtedly one of the motivations for the recitation of the Kaddish by survivors; cf. *Kallah Rabbati* II, see also *Ma'avar Yabbok*, III, Chap. 23.

20. *Shabbat* 152b.

21. *Bava Me'zia* 62b; cf. *Zohar* I, 218a. See also *Ma'avar Yabbok*, I, Chap. 32.

22. *Berakhot* 28b; cf. Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah*, end=Jer. Tal. *Avodah Zarah*, III, 1, for additional examples.

23. *Life After Life*, p. 57.

24. *Shabbat* 152b; *Ketubot* 104a.

counts it is Abraham who welcomes every Jewish person when he enters into eternal life.²⁵ The Talmud also speaks of an announcement made before the soul is about to enter the heavenly academy: "Make a place for so and so."²¹

The presence of a beam of dazzling light, recounted by those who have had the near-death experience, has its parallel in Rabbinic literature, and may be the meaning of the passage in the Psalms, "a light is sown for the righteous,"²⁷ Elsewhere, other luminous visions at the moment of death are reported. Thus, we read in *Sifra* that, while man cannot see the glory of God during his lifetime, he can see it at the time of death,²⁸ which coincides with the reports that in the near-death experience one envisions a Being of light of unparalleled brilliance.²⁹ Hence, we have such expressions as the righteous envisioning "the brilliance of the Divine presence" in the afterlife.³⁰ There are also Talmudic reports of a pillar of light which precedes the bier of the righteous. This phenomenon, however, is said to apply to only the greatest of a generation.³¹ According to another report in the Talmud, one of the righteous, Rabbi Abbahu, was shown thirteen rivers of balsam at the moment of death, in keeping with the view that the righteous are said to see the reward that is in store for them when they are near death.³²

Likewise, the report that the Being of Light questions the individual about his life and wishes him to think about himself, stressing the importance of loving people and acquiring knowledge,³³ corresponds to the Talmudic view that the first thing asked of a man is "Have you dealt faithfully with your fellows?" and only then, "Have you set aside time for the study of Torah?"³⁴ The review of one's life before one's eyes is a salient feature of the death experience. Even the secret conversations of a man are once more revealed to him at the time of his departure from the world.³⁵

That there are also unhappy features for some during this transitional period is reported by would-be suicides,³⁶ and is confirmed by other

25. *Kiddushin* 72b; see also Rashi and Tosafot thereon. Cf. Luke 16:22; cf. also *Eruvin* 19a and compare (and contrast) with Luke 16:19 ff.

26. *Berakhot* 18b; *Ketubot* 77b.

27. Ps. 97:11; see *Zohar* I, 45b; II, 220b; III, 93a.

28. *Sifra* to Lev. 1:1 in reference to Exodus 33:20; cf. *Zohar* I, 39a.

29. *Life After Life*, pp. 58 ff.

30. *Berakhot* 17a. Cf. *Hagigah* 12a. Cf. also *Zohar* I, 47a, 59a; III, 239a. On the longing of the soul to see the supernal light, see *Zohar* II, 210b.

31. *Ketubot* 17a.

32. *Genesis Rabbah* 62, 1; cf. *Taanit* 25a. The sight, of course, is not physical, but with the eye of the spirit (*Ma'avar Yabbok* III, Chap. 32). In *Zohar* 200b-201a we read of "mountains of balsam." Needless to say, we are dealing here with mystical concepts, rather than with physical realities.

33. *Life After Life*, p. 65.

34. *Shabbat* 31a; *Sanhedrin* 7a and *Tosafot* thereon.

35. *Taanit* 11a; *Hagigah* 5b.

36. *Life After Life*, pp. 143-4.

Talmudic reports that there are features about the afterlife which are not in all instances glory and light. There are moments filled with regret and sorrow. Thus, the Talmud reports that the wicked are met by beings devoid of Divine light.³⁷

The ethereal body in which the spirit envisions itself as encased³⁸ corresponds to the astral body of the theosophists³⁹ or the *zelem* (image) of the Jewish mystics.⁴¹

The Talmud also records experiences of individuals who died and, having been brought back to life, were questioned about their experiences when dead. They told about seeing a world in reverse: those who were great here are lowly there, and vice-versa.⁴¹

There are also accounts in the literature as to what happens to a person at the very moment of dying, the fear experienced, as well as the ease or difficulty with which the soul departs from the body.⁴² Possibly not all events are remembered when life is restored to the body, as some of these experiences were reportedly revealed in a dream to survivors by their deceased relatives.⁴³ Nor should we lose sight of the variety of experiences resulting from individual differences. The great saints undoubtedly enter into a world of far superior glory than the one into which the average, even though decent, person enters.⁴⁴ We need not, of course, assume that the evildoers of the world all enter into the kingdom of light without proper expiation.

37. *Ketubot* 104a.

38. *Life After Life*, p. 45 ff.

39. See H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. 432.

40. See Rashi on *Hagigah* 12b; R. Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, XXI, 4, 6; Hillel Zeitlin, *Be-Fardes ha-Hasidut ve-ha-Kabbalah* (Yavneh, 1960), pp. 176-8. See also R. Chayim Vital, *Ez Hayyim* (Jerusalem edition), II, 15a.

41. *Pesahim* 50a.

42. *Moed Katan* 28a; *Avodah Zarah* 20b; cf. *Ketubot* 77b, cf. *Berakhot* 8a. [In *Avodah Zarah* 10b the disciples of R. Judah are credited with the power of resuscitating the dead. This reference is very likely the power of resuscitating those on the verge of death or individuals in a coma-like state. The servants of Antoninus were probably drugged and appeared dead.]

43. *Moed Katan* 28a; cf. *Berakhot* 18b.

44. See *Bava Batra* 75a, to the effect that not all sants achieve an identical glory.

Louis Jacobs: Man of Controversy, Scholar of Distinction

BYRON L. SHERWIN

A SOLIDLY BUILT MAN WITH PENETRATING eyes, an endearing charm and an entertaining wit, Louis Jacobs has made a major contribution to Jewish scholarship. However, despite his enviable prolific output, his astonishing erudition and his ability precisely to articulate recondite notions, his work has received scant attention in the American theological community or the American Jewish one. The purpose of the present essay is to begin to redress this undeserved slight to one of contemporary Jewry's most significant thinkers.

One may divide Jacobs' many books and articles into three primary areas: (1) theology; (2) rabbinics; (3) Jewish mysticism.

Studies in Theology

The contemporary Jewish theologian is not merely confronted with the problem of defending the existence of God or the significance of revelation; he must also meet the challenge of establishing the very existence of Jewish theology. He must respond to the "pan-halakhist" who perceives Judaism as a system of law devoid of theological import, who understands Judaism as a way of living but not as a way of thinking. He must counter the claims of those who consider theology a peculiarly Gentile concern. He must answer the secularist who sees Judaism as only a cultural, ethnic manifestation of Jewish peoplehood, stripped of all religious and theological content. Furthermore, the Jewish theologian must work in a community—the Jewish one—which largely fails to take him or his theological concerns seriously. He must relate to colleagues in the academic world—including theological seminaries—who assign little importance to contemporary theological reflection. Despite these disabilities, Louis Jacobs has persisted in his attempt to articulate an organized Jewish theology for our times.

A Jewish Theology (1973) represents the first systematic presentation of the major themes of Jewish religious thought since Kaufmann Kohler's *Jewish Theology*, published more than fifty years previously (1918).¹ While

1. Louis Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology* (New York: Behrman House, 1973); Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (New York: KTAV, 1968, 2nd edition). Samuel S. Cohon began a systematic Jewish theology in the late 1930s but never completed it.

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this earlier work is apologetic in nature and totally rationalistic in its orientation, Jacobs' book offers a forthright and rounded portrait of Jewish theological concerns, including constant references to the Jewish mystical tradition. Unlike other thinkers who seek to apologize for Judaism or defend it against intellectual and social challenges, Jacobs attempts to respond to a single question—what can Jews believe today?; i.e., what kind of faith emerges “*within* traditional Judaism” when it encounters modernism? The theologian, he says, “must try to present a coherent picture of what Jews can believe without subterfuge and with intellectual honesty.”² For Jacobs, theology is both art and science. Theologians must be “committed to the truth they are seeking to explore,” but they must also be practitioners of *Jüdische Wissenschaft*, the scientific study of Judaism. Finally, they must also be artists.

Like Abraham J. Heschel, Jacobs rejects a monolithic view of Judaism as being unfaithful to the multi-faceted complexity of Jewish religious thought. Jewish tradition, he maintains, has no clear “mainstream” but many streams. It provides a variety of equally defensible traditional options for most theological, moral or personal problems. The process of analysis and selection of these options does not reduce tradition to the arbitrary selective will of the scholar, nor does it elevate modern tendencies into an absolute standard for judgment. But it does provide an opportunity for honest, careful confrontation with the tradition in order to elicit an authentic response to a contemporary problem.

In articulating his theology of Judaism, Jacobs harnesses the tools of analytic, linguistic philosophy to classical Judaic sources. While most modern Jewish religious thinkers have allied themselves with the existentialist school, Jacobs demonstrates that analytic philosophy, the currently dominant school of thought in Britain and America, need not be an enemy, but can be an ally, of Jewish philosophical theology. His utilization of linguistic philosophy is most clearly evident in *Faith*.³

By reason of its structure, *Faith* reads like a contemporary version of a medieval Jewish philosophical classic, Saadia's *Beliefs and Opinions*. Saadia moves from a discussion of how we know what we know, to a presentation of the content of Jewish belief. Similarly, Jacobs begins by discussing how we may come to believe what we believe. He then analyzes possible objections to that belief, i.e., to theistic belief. Finally, he provides a brief description of the nature and content of Jewish belief. By his use of linguistic philosophical tools, Jacobs subtly demonstrates the methodological continuity between medieval Jewish philosophy and modern analytic philosophy. For both approaches, belief entails the affirmation of the truth-value of propositions and the requirement for consistency amongst those propositions. Like Maimonides, Jacobs holds that since faith may

2. *A Jewish Theology*, pp. 14–15.

3. Louis Jacobs, *Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

mean assertion of the truth of a proposition, its clear, concise articulation is of great importance. Thus, his mastery of linguistic philosophy provides him with the impetus for clarity, so miserably lacking in many Jewish thinkers in the existentialist camp, and he offers a viable alternative to the "personal propaganda" which characterizes much that passes for contemporary Jewish thought.

In *Principles of the Jewish Faith* and *A Jewish Theology*, Jacobs treats all of the major problems of Jewish theology, e.g., the existence of God, the nature of God, providence and free-will, evil, revelation, rationales for observance, Jewish peoplehood, prayer, Messianism, life after death, and others. However, his presentation is marred by three factors.

Firstly, his own theological perspective is often obscured behind the mass of information that he conveys. While some existentialist theologians may be criticized for being unduly confessional, considering autobiographical insights to be theological facts, Jacobs is guilty of the opposite. He clearly reviews a plethora of past and present theological options on a given issue, but oftentimes fails to present his own position on it.

Secondly, Jacobs may be taken to account for not having adequately or directly provided a theological stance concerning the two events which offer the most persistent challenge to contemporary Jewish theology: the Holocaust and the State of Israel. While he does make occasional references to the Holocaust, he does not provide a specific theological response to it, nor does he discuss in detail its implications for the viability of, or the nature of, a post-Holocaust Jewish theology.⁴

Only in *A Jewish Theology* does he first confront the State of Israel as a theological problem, albeit he does so in surprisingly little depth and detail. For Jacobs, "theology cannot provide detailed practical solutions to the problems facing Jews now that the State of Israel is a reality." What theology can do is to seek "to foster certain attitudes which, from the theological point of view, are sounder than others." He states five such attitudes and elucidates them all too briefly and insufficiently. They are: God alone is to be worshipped, not the Jewish people; Jewish nationalism is no substitute for religion; God is the Father not only of the Jewish people but of all mankind; there should be no crude interpretation of the notion of "sacred soil;" Hebrew or Israeli culture is not Torah.⁵

Though helpful in formulating a theological stance toward the State of Israel, these five attitudes are insufficiently articulated, and Jacobs could make a monumental contribution to contemporary Jewish thought were he to work out a complete theology regarding the State. Furthermore, one can only hope that he would revise his position that Jewish theology is unable to provide practical solutions to the problems confronting Jewish existence, specifically with regard to Israel. An expansion and

4. *Faith*, pp. 113–126; *A Jewish Theology*, pp. 116–135.

5. *A Jewish Theology* pp. 281–283.

elucidation of his five attitudes might also force a re-thinking of priorities and activities within Diasporan, especially American, Jewry.

Thirdly, Jacobs' discussion of theological issues is uneven. Some, like revelation, or the nature of God, are treated in meticulous detail, while others, like peoplehood and statehood, are discussed all too briefly and the sources utilized in reflecting upon them are limited.

In the early 1960s, Jacobs' views on the nature of revelation were attacked by the British Orthodox rabbinate and the ensuing "Jacobs controversy" became the most significant event of post-World War II British Jewry. Certainly it was the only Jewish theological dispute ever to receive international press coverage.⁶ Largely because of it, Jacobs' theological writings have stressed the need to formulate a viable theology of revelation for contemporary Jewry.

The dispute between Jacobs and the British Beth Din centered about two irreconcilable views. His Orthodox opponents embraced the fundamentalist position which believes the Torah to have been literally dictated by God and which considers Jewish law to be His revealed word. In this view, revelation is a monologue of God to man. The revelatory message—the Bible, Judaism, Jewish law—is devoid of a human element; it is totally of divine origin and divine dictate. Jewish religious commitment, therefore, is either/or; i.e., either one accepts that the Torah and Jewish law were dictated by God, or one might as well give up Judaism altogether. Consequently, this position denies the validity of Biblical criticism, as it is presumed to claim a human role in the authorship of the Bible.

Jacobs' position, as first stated in 1957, in *We Have Reason to Believe*,⁷ rejected the fundamentalist posture. He asserted that the Bible is not revelation itself, not the verbatim word of God, but the *record* of revelation. As such, it contains a human as well as a divine element, and bears all the marks of human literary production. It can, therefore, be subjected to the critical methods of analysis which are used to clarify the meaning of other literary works.

In the wake of the "Jacobs controversy," his position on revelation and religious observance was developed and refined in *Principles of the Jewish Faith* and *A Jewish Theology*.⁸ It is to the details of that position that we now turn our attention.

Jacobs deftly ties his discussion of revelation to an analysis of the theological underpinnings of Orthodox, Reform and Conservative Judaism. His own final position, which approximates the Conservative

6. On the Jacobs controversy, see: Chaim Bermant, *Troubled Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), Chapter Nineteen; Ignaz Maybaum, "The Jacobs Affair," *JUDAISM* 13, (1964): 471-77; Alfred Sherman, "The Jacobs Affair," *Commentary* 38 (October 1964): 60-64; Sefton Temkin, "A Crisis in Anglo-Jewry," *Conservative Judaism* 18 (Fall, 1963): 18-35.

7. Louis Jacobs, *We Have Reason to Believe* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1957).

8. Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

one, emerges from his polemical attacks upon the theologies of revelation underlying Orthodoxy and Reform. His views on revelation provide theological conceptualization as well as a basis for practical implementation.⁹

Jacobs identifies the Orthodox position with a fundamentalist understanding of revelation that the Torah and its commandment are dictates of God that can neither be questioned nor altered by human initiative. They can only be obeyed. Man worships God as a servant obeys his master, in passive obedience.

Jewish tradition in its entirety was given by God at Sinai; the rabbinic interpretations of Scripture were already revealed to Moses at Sinai. The halakhah, being totally of divine origin, must be objectively and immutably true, for only that which is objectively true may be eternally valid and binding upon all generations. Being devoid of a subjective human element, the law proceeds according to an internal logic of its own, unaffected by social or intellectual fashion. Just as the prophet is a passive recipient of revelation, rather than a partner in a dialogue with God, so is the halakhist a passive expositor of the law. He may elicit the inherent truth of the tradition revealed at Sinai, but he may not legislate. The tradition was given once and takes time to unfold. The prophet, the sage, the scholar only make the implicit become explicit. Human ingenuity and creativity only uncover; they do not innovate; they do not discover. In addition, this position assumes that truth is regressive; i.e., the further we get from Sinai by the passage of time, the further we get from the source of truth—the revelation at Sinai when all truth was revealed. This regressive notion of truth finds its classical expression in the Talmudic citation: “If the early scholars were like angels, we are like men; if they are like men, we are like asses.”¹⁰

Jacobs emphatically rejects this posture. For him, fundamentalism is an essentially medieval understanding of the nature of revelation and of Judaism which can no longer be held, in the light of the findings of modern scholarship and of historical investigation into the nature and development of our faith. To hold to fundamentalism is to defend a single strand of Jewish thought and experience while overlooking other equally defensible ones within classical Judaism.

While Jacobs finds the fundamentalist stance, which he identifies with Orthodoxy, to be wanting, so does he perceive the classical Reform view of revelation to be fallacious.

9. For Jacobs' views on revelation and observance of Jewish law, see, *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, pp. 289–301; *A Jewish Theology*, pp. 199–230. Many modern Jewish theologians have been often justifiably accused of being generally ignorant of halakhic literature. In *Theology in the Responsa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), Jacobs demonstrates the irrelevancy of this charge if directed at himself. This pioneering study of the relationship between Jewish theology and Jewish law will undoubtedly engender future studies on the *aggadah* in the *halakhah*, the *halakhah* in the *aggadah*, and on the relationship between them.

10. *Sabbath* 112b.

Classical Reform Judaism's rejection of the binding quality of Jewish religious law (halakhah) was based upon its assumption that revelation is "progressive;" that is, as time goes on, as man "evolves," God's truth is progressively revealed to man. Thus, the more recent or contemporary an idea, the more valid it is. Since Reform sees itself as the most recent expression of Judaism, it expresses, therefore, the highest truth now available.

For Jacobs, this notion of progressive revelation, which rejects the binding quality of halakhah in the name of a higher, more recently revealed truth, is specious. It is an improper attempt to apply a Darwinian theory of progressive evolution to revelation and to the history of Judaism. While Judaism is continually changing and developing, it is not necessarily evolving from a lower to a higher form. In the wake of two World Wars, the Holocaust, numerous other wars, social strife, ecological threats and economic uncertainties, the claim that mankind is making automatic progress in religious development, moral insight and quality of life, proves to be hopelessly naive. Jacobs writes:

The doctrine of progressive revelation seems to imply that God has kept former generations in ignorance of the truth in its fullness until the spiritual supermen of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came on the scene. It hints that in many ways we are spiritually superior to Amos, Isaiah, Akiba and Maimonides. . . . It comes perilously close to a belief in God who is constantly changing His mind.¹¹

Having found both the fundamentalist and the "progressive" views to be wanting, Jacobs proceeds to articulate his own position regarding revelation and the nature of Jewish law and tradition.

Revelation, he holds, is not revealed in "propositional" terms, either all at once or progressively, but is an intense divine-human encounter embracing a divine initiative and a human response. "Revelation is an event, not a series of propositions about God and His demands."¹² Man is a partner in that event. Out of it, and in response to it, Jews have creatively developed the tradition known as "Judaism." For Jacobs, as for Zechariah Frankel, the "father of Conservative Judaism," "Judaism is the religion of the Jews;" that is, as a result of the revelatory experience and in continuous response to it, Jews continue to develop Jewish faith throughout the generations.

Accordingly, the Bible and subsequent Jewish tradition are neither dictates of God nor are they a body of revelatory truth (presently made

11. *Jewish Theology*, p. 202. Unfortunately, Jacobs limits his discussion of "progressive revelation" to the articulation of that position embraced by Classical Reform Judaism. Compare, for example, Robert Gordis who maintains that progress is not necessarily unilinear; that the graph has its dips and that human life and Jewish life continually progresses in terms of ascending spirals.

12. *A Jewish Theology*, p. 203.

obsolete by the revelation of higher truths) given to people intellectually and spiritually more primitive than we are. On the contrary, "the Bible is a *record* of how men were confronted by God," and subsequent Jewish tradition is the record of how Jews in past generations confronted God, seeking to understand His plan for mankind in general and His will for the people of Israel in particular.

... [R]evelation is a meeting or series of meetings with God Himself. Revelation is an event. It has been translated into words by human beings who experienced it and their words are found in the record we know as the Bible. From out of its pages we, too, can hear the voice of God speaking to us, but it is the voice of God speaking through the distortions of the fallible human record. Unless we ourselves are prophets how else could we hear God's voice? There is nothing in this view basically opposed to the Jewish idea, though it does involve, of course, a thorough reinterpretation of what revelation means.¹³

For Jacobs, the Bible is a record of a direct revelation of God. There is, however, a second indirect variety of revelation in which the people of Israel play an active and creative role. As in the Talmudic notion that Moses legislated certain laws on his own volition and God later ratified his decrees,¹⁴ so, in this view, the laws, traditions, ideas and observances accepted by the whole Community of Israel became binding as the word of God. Thus, for Jacobs, revelation is neither "regressive" nor "progressive," but continuous. The Judaism of today can, at best, strive to be an authentic continuation of the past. The Judaism of today is neither the highest form of Jewish experience nor is it the lowest. The challenge to contemporary Judaism is to try to be the best form of Jewish belief and practice for its day. But, there are no guarantees. The constant danger of atrophy, on the one hand, and radical subjectivism, on the other, may prevent the vibrant, creative development of a form of Judaism compatible with past traditions and current intellectual and spiritual needs. However, as Jacobs puts it, quoting Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, "The search for Torah is itself Torah."

In articulating this position in *Principles of the Jewish Faith*, Jacobs approximates the view of the founders of Conservative Judaism like Zechariah Frankel, Solomon Schechter and Louis Ginzberg, who held that the source of Jewish authority is not in the Bible but in the historical and religious experience of the people of Israel. In *A Jewish Theology*, Jacobs goes beyond this earlier view. Here, he expresses a "theological approach" to the nature of Judaism—specifically, to Jewish law—saying that one must go beyond the "historical" view of Frankel which perceives

13. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

14. See the discussion and sources noted by Abraham J. Heschel in his *Torah Min HaShamayim* [Theology of Ancient Judaism] (New York: Soncino, 1965), Vol. II, pp. 282–285.

Judaism only in those terms. One must adopt an attitude which understands Judaism as a religion and not only as the historical product of the Jewish people. For one adopting this approach, the *mizvot* are to be perceived as ways to God. Because they can succeed in bringing people to God, the *mizvot*, though developed by the people of Israel, must be considered as binding as the will of God. Thus, for Jacobs, *halakhah* remains binding, but individual laws, since they are not divine *dictates*, are continually open to change and to analysis.

Despite Jacobs' highly sophisticated theological efforts to articulate a non-fundamentalist position on the nature of revelation and Jewish law, and despite the many merits of that position, his stance creates many difficulties.¹⁵

To equate the collective will of the Community of Israel with Judaism is problematic. Not only can such a notion be used to justify any idea or deed, no matter how intellectually preposterous or morally abhorrent, by invoking the motto *vox populi vox Dei*, but it suggests that any current generation of Jews, no matter how distant they may be from Jewish life or learning, may collectively decide the nature of Judaism. When Jews lived in the uni-cultural *kehillot* of Europe and were immersed in Jewish life and learning, such a position might be defensible, but, at present, when many are ignorant of Jewish thought and practice, its viability may be doubted.¹⁶ Furthermore, to claim that the collective voice of the people determined the tradition is to endanger the possibility for authentic minority dissent. Indeed, the views of minority dissenters, like Maimonides and the Kotzker Rebbe, cannot be eliminated from Judaism

15. For an analysis of some of these difficulties, see: Menachem Kellner, "Louis Jacobs' Doctrine of Revelation," *Tradition* XIV, 4, (Fall, 1974): 143-148.

16. Jacobs' position in this regard approximates Solomon Schechter's notion of "Catholic Israel," which was formulated when the majority of Jews were observant. This concept was offered as an alternative to the innovations made by Reform rabbinic synods and to the Orthodox claim that the *Shulhan Arukh* was the ultimate halakhic authority. To assert this position at a time when the majority of Jews are not committed to Jewish life and practice is problematic for Schechter as well as for Jacobs. In *Principles*, Jacobs himself notes the difficulties of this view. For example, at the time of Elijah, when most Jews worshipped the Baal and only the minority worshipped God, Baalism might have been said to represent the collective will of the community of Israel or Catholic Israel (p. 297). To affirm this notion today, when the majority of Jews do not observe the Sabbath and the dietary laws, for example, would imply that such observance is no longer part of Judaism as it does not express the collective will of the Jewish people. Jacobs might have considered attempts to reformulate Schechter's notion, such as that proposed by Robert Gordis, for whom Catholic Israel might be defined as referring not to all Jews, but only to the majority or consensus of those Jews concerned with Jewish religious tradition and committed to its observance. (See *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* (1942) pp. 78-81; *Judaism for the Modern Age*, pp. 166-186.) For individuals such as Gordis and Jacobs, who identify with Conservative Judaism, this redefinition is also problematic, for, if Catholic Israel is so defined, Orthodoxy might justifiably claim that it is Catholic Israel and that it should determine what Judaism is. One may suggest, however, that Catholic Israel might be usefully construed to denote not the collective will of the people of Israel or of committed Jews, but of the social factor in the development of Judaism; that is, not the sole factor, but one of a number of factors in determining Jewish belief and practice at a given time and place.

simply because they did not hold views in accordance with the collective will of the Community of Israel. To adopt this position is potentially to threaten Jacobs' own understanding of Judaism as a multi-faceted, rather than a monolithic, faith.

To replace the absolutism of fundamentalism with the absolutism of the *Volkgeist* merely transfers authority from presumed divine dictates to the presumed collective will of the people, discarding an objective standard for a subjective, socially determined one. Furthermore, revelation remains monologic rather than dialogic. For the fundamentalist, revelation is a monologue of God to Israel. For Jacobs, revelation is a monologue of Israel to God.

His claim that because the *mizvot*, developed by the people of Israel, bring men to God, they must, therefore, be considered as if they were commanded by God, is never adequately defended. It does not necessarily follow that because revelation is a monologue of Israel to God that it is also a monologue of God to Israel.

Jacobs' claim that "the *whole* of the Torah is *minhag*, custom"¹⁷ is similarly problematic. There are certainly adequate grounds in classical Judaism to defend the claim that *minhag* is Torah; i.e., that the customs and traditions developed by the people may become integrated into the Torah (in the generic, expansive use of term; i.e., into the Tradition).¹⁸ However, it does not follow that Torah in its entirety, that all of Jewish tradition, is the product of the creative energies of the Jewish people. A non-fundamentalist alternative position to that of Jacobs might argue for a *dialogic* view of revelation in which Judaism is understood to consist of an objective, divine element and a subjective, human one: the latter including custom and rabbinic legislation, etc., and the former including the basic ideas and institutions of Jewish faith such as, for example, monotheism, the Sabbath, or the chosenness of Israel. To posit both objective and subjective elements within Judaism would provide a non-fundamentalist stance which would prevent Judaism from becoming a socially determined or personally idiosyncratic affair.¹⁹

While Jacobs may be correct in perceiving his approach as being amenable to many modern Jews, it does not seem viable from the standpoint of Jewish tradition itself. Though he *implies* that modernity

17. *A Jewish Theology*, p. 224.

18. See, for example, the statements of Jacob Mollin (Maharil) and Judah Loew of Prague (Maharal), "The custom of our forefathers is Torah" (*Minhag avoteinu, torah hu.*); *Shulhan Arukh-Yoreh Deah* 376:4 (Isserles quoting Mollin) and Judah Loew's *Netivot Olam*, "Netiv Ha-Torah," Chapter 7. R. Meir of Rothenberg is quoted as saying "The customs of the communities are Torah, even where such customs abrogate halakhah;" see *Sefer Tashbetz* 2:63.

19. A variant of this position has been formulated by Robert Gordis in *A Faith For Moderns* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1960), pp. 136–159; and *Judaism for the Modern Age* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Cudahy, 1955), pp. 153–166. I also have delineated such a position at length in an essay, "Philosophies of Jewish Law" to be published in Jacob Agus, ed., *Conservative Jewish Thought Today*.

ought to serve as a standard by which to measure the viability of various observances, that is certainly not his view, for elsewhere he has written:

It is only an attitude of cynical expediency that justifies the ruthless pruning of challenging ideas by labeling them "outmoded." The yardstick to be employed is not that nebulous concept "modern thought" but Jewish tradition itself.²⁰

Jacobs is not unaware of the difficulties inherent within his position, yet, like so many others who hold similar views, he persists in trying to attain the elusive synthesis of tradition and change. One can only hope that he will continue to develop and refine his views on Jewish law and religious observance.

Studies in Rabbinics

Though Jacobs' theological works, popular writings, and his studies in Jewish mysticism have received some attention, his studies in rabbinics, because of their highly technical nature, have had but a limited readership.²¹ These studies rest upon assumptions set down in his theological works. Only when classical Jewish literature is assumed to have been a product of human literary creativity and not a product of divine dictation does critical analysis become possible.

The fact that the rabbis were interested mainly in discussing the word of God and applying it to the life of their people need not blind us to the recognition of the literary form and style of their greatest monument, the Babylonian Talmud.²²

His investigations into Talmudic history, economics and literary form have been a constant concern, starting with his doctoral dissertation, his earliest essays²³ and his first scholarly book, *Studies in Talmudic Logic and Methodology*, whose first section deals with the forms of argument in Talmudic literature. Though extensive work on this subject had already been done by other scholars, especially Adolf Schwarz, Jacobs critically evaluates their claims and presents his own views. He demonstrates that not only deduction was known to ancient rhetoric in general and to rabbinic rhetoric in particular—as other scholars had maintained—but

20. Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Values* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1960), pp. 9–10.

21. Louis Jacobs, *Studies in Talmudic Logic and Methodology* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1961); "Are There Fictitious Baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud?" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 42, (1971): 185–197; "The Talmudic Sugya as a Literary Unit," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, (1973): 119–127; "A Study of Four Parallel Sugyot," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, (1974): 389–411; "How Much of the Babylonian Talmud is Pseudepigraphic," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28, (1977): 46–60.

22. *Studies in Talmudic Logic*, p. 69.

23. Louis Jacobs, "The Economic Situation of the Jews in Babylonia" (Hebrew) *Melila* 5, (1955): 83–100; "The Economic Conditions of the Jews in Babylon in Talmudic Times Compared with Palestine," *Journal of Semitic Studies* (1957): 349–359.

that induction, as well, was known and employed. In the opening chapter, Jacobs refutes Schwarz's long-held view that the *kal va-homer* form of argument, found in both Biblical and rabbinic literature, is similar to the Aristotelean syllogism. On the contrary, Jacobs forcefully argues that the *kal va-homer* is not like the syllogism, but may be compared, rather, to a form of Indian inference known as *kimpunar*.²⁴

The second chapter provides an intriguing exercise in intellectual history. Here the author demonstrates a remarkable affinity between an early rabbinic form of argument, *binyan av*, and a form of argument discussed in the nineteenth century by John Stuart Mill. Next, Jacobs examines the Talmudic form of argument called *sebhara* and contends that it is roughly equivalent to "common sense." (He implicitly suggests a similarity between the *sebhara* and the "reasonable man" criterion in Anglo-American law.) Finally, he discusses the use of the *reductio ad absurdum* in Talmudic literature.

The second section of this book deals with "Talmudic methodology." Like Abraham Weiss and, more recently, David Halivni-Weiss and Jacob Neusner, Jacobs utilizes literary criticism to analyze Talmudic sources. He maintains that, for the sake of literary art and pedagogical stimulation, the editors of the Talmud skillfully "worked-up" a story from materials which they already had. As a result of the writings of Jacobs and others, the popular view that the Talmud is a disorganized hodgepodge of unrelated, unstructured and undisciplined discourses should be laid to rest. He summarizes his research into the literary style of the Talmud as follows:

(The Talmud, i.e., the Gemara) is far from being a verbatim report of discussions, which took place in the Babylonian schools but is rather a contrived literary product of great skill, in which older material has been reshaped by methods having a close resemblance to those of literary artists throughout the ages.

Studies in Jewish Mysticism

Jacobs' vast knowledge of the intricacies of Kabbalistic thought is clearly evident throughout his theological and popular writings. Though ideas rooted in Jewish mysticism have long been anathema to modern Jewish theological discourse, Jacobs has reinjected it with an infusion of mystical notions.

Most recent studies in Jewish mysticism have emerged from the pens of Gershom Scholem and his disciples. While thoroughly aware of the writings of the "Scholem School," Jacobs remains essentially uninfluenced by them and has formulated his own unique approach to Jewish mysticism, in general, and to hasidism in particular, especially Habad or

24. Louis Jacobs, "The Qual va-Homer Argument in the Old Testament," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35, (1972): 221-227.

Lubavitch. He does not seek Sabbatean influences behind every hasidic tree, as does the "Scholem school," nor does he perceive hasidism primarily as a variety of proto-existentialism, devoid of sophisticated systems of thought, à la the popularizers of hasidism, such as Buber. Jacobs is neither a hasid nor an apologist for hasidism; he only attempts to elucidate and to analyze aspects of hasidism that are often overlooked by others.

He has three major studies on the subject—*Seeker of Unity*, *Tract on Ecstasy*, and *Hasidic Prayer*. In the first book, he carefully examines the life and works of Rabbi Aaron Horowitz of Starosselje (1766–1828).²⁵ A little known hasidic master, Rabbi Aaron was an unconventional, but highly sophisticated, speculative mystic and a disciple of Schneur Zalmen of Liady, the founder of Lubavitch hasidism. *Seeker of Unity* portrays a side of hasidism virtually otherwise unavailable to the English reader and provides evidence that hasidism did produce mystical theology of a highly complex and intricate nature. Besides portraying the "cerebral" side of hasidism, Jacobs also offers to the reader of *Seeker of Unity* what is probably the clearest statement in English of the Zoharitic doctrine of the *sefirot* (Divine effusions, emanations) and of the Lurianic concept of *zimzum* (Divine contraction).

In this study of Rabbi Aaron, Jacobs shows how one specific Jewish mystic dealt with the theosophical problem that is at the root of Kabbalistic speculation: how does one account for the existence of anything other than God; how does one account for the emergence of a finite universe from an infinite God? Hence, Rabbi Aaron's system, as elucidated by Jacobs, deserves a chapter in the long history of philosophical cosmology as well as in the history of Jewish mysticism.

Towards the end of *Seeker of Unity*, Jacobs turns to a discussion of "practical mysticism;" i.e., the knowledge gained during the mystical experience. This concern pervades *Tract on Ecstasy* and *Hasidic Prayer*. A significant, though unfortunate, characteristic of Jewish mystical literature is the virtual absence of "diaries" in which the mystic describes the forms and stages of rapture that he has experienced.²⁶ An exception to this rule is the *Kuntras Ha-Hitpaalut* of Dobh Baer of Lubavitch. Jacobs' *Tract on Ecstasy* is a masterful translation of this rare gem of Kabbalistic literature. Generously introduced and annotated, the *Tract* . . . invites both scholar and layman into a fascinating but unexplored area of writing. For those in search of a particularly and authentically Jewish guide to meditation, the *Tract* . . . should be required reading. In this vein, reference should be made to the more recent work, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*.²⁷ A major compilation of felicitously translated and clearly

25. Louis Jacobs, *Seeker of Unity* (New York: Basic Books, 1966); *Tract on Ecstasy* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1963); *Hasidic Prayer* (New York: Schocken, 1973).

26. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), p. 121.

27. Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken, 1977).

explained primary sources, it provides a pervasive survey of the varieties of Jewish mystical experiences to be found in the scant literature of Jewish mystical biography and autobiography.

Just as mystical diaries are a rarity in Kabbalistic literature, so is the notion of *unio mystica*—the union of the mystic with the Divine. Though it is an essential feature of other mystical traditions, the claim has been that it is virtually absent in Jewish mysticism.²⁸ Jacobs, however, in his Kabbalistic studies, demonstrates its presence in both theoretical and practical Jewish mysticism.

He shows that there is a strand of Judaism which held that the demarcation between the divine and the human is not absolute. From Biblical theology, through medieval Jewish philosophy and anti-Christian polemics, a concerted effort was made to distinguish the divine from the human, God from man. However, as Jacobs shows, late Jewish mystical speculation endeavored to erase that distinction.²⁹ Man's soul, rather than being considered a creation of God, was perceived to be "a part of God." Hence, the goal of mystical experience, as presented by Rabbi Aaron and by Dobh Baer, was reunification of the divine soul within man with the Divine source from which it emerged. In this view, the aim of prayer at its highest level is "annihilation of the self" in order to achieve a level of rapture in which *unio mystica* is attained. Both Rabbi Aaron and Dobh Baer offer a road-map as to how that ultimate mystical experience may be achieved.

In *Hasidic Prayer*, Jacobs implicitly rebuts a commonly asserted claim that Judaism is a "this-worldly" religion. He demonstrates that for the greatest revivalist movement which Judaism has produced—hasidism—the ultimate goal of religious existence, specifically of prayer, is to forsake the world; to abandon the self; to affirm our empirical observations as being saturated with illusion; to consider our world an illusion in the mind of God; to seek union with the ultimate Reality, with the Divine.

Before concluding a discussion of Jacobs' writings on Jewish mysticism, one should note his masterful translation of one of the great classics of Kabbalistic pietica, Moses Cordevero's (1522–1570) *Palm Tree of Deborah* (*Tomer Devorah*).³⁰ While much attention has been paid to the moralistic writings of the Jewish philosophers, little effort has been expended upon elucidating the nature of the ethical notions that emerge from the theosophic speculation of leading Kabbalists. This translation of the ethical treatise by classical Kabbalism's greatest systematic thinker is a welcome contribution. It is noteworthy that Jacobs applies some of Cordevero's ideas in his own popular discussions of Jewish ethics.³¹

28. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 5.

29. Louis Jacobs, "The Doctrine of the 'Divine Spark' in Man in Jewish Sources," in *Studies in Rationalism, Judaism and Universalism*, ed. R. Loewe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 87–115.

30. *Palm Tree of Deborah* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1960).

Conclusion

Jacobs' writings offer a balance between learned and popular expression. Despite his profound scholarship, he is always the teacher, the preacher, seeking to reach the many, seeking to enchant and to stimulate the layman. While many scholars find it nearly impossible to popularize difficult ideas and while many writers can do no more than vulgarize the sublime and the complex, Jacobs' literary and pedagogic gifts provide his readers with "popularization" in the best sense of the term. For Jacobs, the popular need not be "beneath the concern of the serious." "It is in many ways harder to write a popular book with clarity than a learned one,"³² he says. Besides his popular exposition of theological concerns in *We Have Reason to Believe* and his discussion of *Jewish Values*, he treats various aspects of prayer and liturgy in three other small books: *Guide to Yom Kippur*, *Guide to Rosh HaShana* and *Jewish Prayer*.³³

Not only has Jacobs attempted to popularize complex ideas, he has also mined the vast resources of all genres of Jewish literature in order to compose a series of masterfully translated and clearly explained texts, enabling the reader who is uninitiated in Jewish law, philosophy, exegesis, or mysticism to encounter the primary sources themselves. This series, entitled *The Chain of Tradition* and originally intended for high school use, is appropriate for anyone interested in hearing the sources speak for themselves.³⁴

Jacobs' more recent book, *What Does Judaism Say About . . . ?* provides concise, erudite statements on one hundred and ten issues of social, moral, theological and legal concern. It is a treasure trove for the curious, treating topics such as: advertising, artificial insemination, change of sex operations, cremation, drugs, ecology, euthanasia, extra-sensory perception, faith healing, hijacking, hypnotism, nudism, patriotism, pornography, and reincarnation.³⁵

Louis Jacobs' penchant for clarity, his passion for cogency and his always startling erudition make both his scholarly and popular works an inestimable intellectual adventure for the scholar as well as for the layman. His unrivaled ability to confront honestly and forcefully the theological problems of our times provides contemporary Jewry with a "guide to the perplexed."

31. See, for example, *Jewish Values*, p. 121.

32. *We Have Reason to Believe*, p. 151.

33. Louis Jacobs, *A Guide to Yom Kippur* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1957); *A Guide to Rosh HaShana* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1959); *Jewish Prayer* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1955).

34. Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Law* (New York: Behrman House, 1968); *Jewish Ethics, Philosophy and Mysticism* (New York: Behrman House, 1969); *Jewish Thought Today* (New York: Behrman House, 1970); *Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (New York: Behrman House, 1973); *Hasidic Thought* (New York: Behrman House, 1977).

35. Louis Jacobs, *What Does Judaism Say About . . . ?* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973).

A Rabbi-Physician's Prescription for Effective Sermons: The Earliest Hebrew Preaching Manual

HENRY A. SOSLAND

PREACHING, WHEN IT IS FOUND WANTING, may suffer from one of two essential flaws, a deficiency in the composition of the *sermon*, relating either to its form or to its content, or some shortcoming in the *preacher* himself, whether it be superficially in his manner of delivering his message or, more basically, in the pattern and example of his own life. When, on the one hand, Rabbi Joseph Katz of Zaslavl condemned most preachers in his time because their sermons never “entered the hearts of their congregants,” and added that to each preacher one could well say, “Take the beam from between your own eyes,”¹ he was not referring to the written structure of the homilies. His focus was on the *preacher* and the value-system which permitted a man to deliver even the most beautifully designed sermon without the fullest conviction and the imprint of his own personal integrity.

However, when, on the other hand, Rabbi Joel Ibn Shu-aib warned preachers to have their sermons reflect order and clarity with a certain grace and pleasantness in their wording, at the same time providing within each sermon something of general interest for the majority of the listeners as well as something of more profound insight for the very learned who might be present, he was concerned with the organization and composition of the *derashah* itself.²

Post-renaissance Italy was characterized by an “indigenous slackness” in religious matters, the influx of free-thinking Spanish Jews having led to a “fermentation which threatened the religious integrity of the Jewish community.”³ Further complicating the latter half of the seventeenth century were the numerous self-styled Sabbatian preachers who, in the wake of the apostasy of the mystical messiah in 1666, delivered an abundance of bizarre sermons with forced, strange conclusions. Reading some of these *derashot*, one can imagine the degree of theological confusion within the Jewish community in Rome which had already been rocked by the unsettling effects of the visit by Nathan of Gaza, the Sabbatian prophet and, later, that of Sabbatai Raphael, one of the Sabbatian missionaries.

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1. *Rekhev Eliyahu* (Cracow, 1638), p. 35b, on Baba Batra 15b.

2. *Olat Shabbat* (Venice, 1577), introduction.

3. Isaac Barzilay, *Between Religion and Faith* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p. 206.

Around this time, Jacob Zahalon of Rome, described by Nathanial Segre as “one of the three most learned men of his generation,” had evinced deep concern over the ability of preachers to convey their messages to the hearts and minds of their congregants in his “Prayer for *Darshanim*” which he published in 1665. Zahalon had been closely associated with communal developments of his day and, as a physician with a medical degree from the University of Rome, he had helped to fight the epidemics of plague in 1656 and 1657. Later in his life he provided doctors and laymen with a brilliant and practical guide concerning illnesses, their symptoms, and the most recommended methods of treating them in his *Ozar ha-Hayyim* (The Treasury of Life), published in Venice in 1683.

Now Zahalon attempted to apply some of the same humanistic concern to the field of preaching. He must have sensed the urgency of shoring up the whole institution of *darshanut*, having himself been a *darshan* who preached regularly and who had experienced the difficulty of properly preparing and researching well-designed sermons with attractive, interesting interpretations and illustrations. According to Vogelstein and Rieger he was “one of the first in Italy who recognized the religious value of preaching in the synagogue.”⁴

In the same way that the physician must diagnose each patient carefully and correctly, he felt that the preacher must respect his congregation in terms of its needs and the special situations and sensitivities of the people whom he is attempting to reach. He must be constantly aware of their limitations in patience, understanding, or background, as well as of his own weaknesses in expressing himself. If he cannot review his sermon ahead of time objectively and critically, then he has not adequately prepared himself for his grave spiritual and moral responsibility. The preacher, like the physician, must constantly relate his specific efforts to his overall goals and, in addition to spending hours in painstaking research and composition, must seek divine guidance that his *derashah* succeed in fulfilling its ultimate purpose of improving the people.

To these ends, Zahalon wrote the *Or ha-Darshanim* (A Light for Preachers). Originally, it was intended as an introduction to an index which he had prepared for the *Yalqut Shimoni*. This preachers' manual, the earliest such treatise to appear in Hebrew, contains thirteen chapters on how to preach, dealing with the subject, quality, length, order, purpose, and introduction of the *derashah*. The author also devotes chapters to the use of voice and gestures, what to do before and after preaching and, something which he as a physician must have been especially concerned about, how a preacher should care for his health. This work, expanded and probably completed by 1672, received the approval of a reader of Hebrew books from the Holy Office, in early 1693, an endorse-

4. *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, II, p. 268.

ment necessary for its publication.

The following are a number of excerpts from various chapters of the *Or ha-Darshanim* which will illustrate, in part, Zahalon's comprehensive "prescription" for dynamic preaching. In its way, this manual reveals the same characteristics that the medical text, *Ozar ha-Hayyim*, shows us about its author as a physician: he was sophisticated, thoughtful, and dedicated, a man of consummate skill.

* * *

1:2) A preacher must avoid having too many parts in his sermon. One, two, or three parts, at most, are sufficient, for when one makes too many sections within a sermon, his listeners become irritated and confused, as the sages have remarked, "Where there is excess, there is confusion."

1:4) He should try to make his subject matter one of current interest. For example, during the days of *Sukkot*, the season for our rejoicing, one ought not to deliver sermons reproving the people. On the other hand, if it is a period of repentance, it would be inappropriate to spend much time in his sermon in the spirit of great joyousness. Further, if there is a bridegroom or a baby boy born within the community and about to enter the covenant of Abraham, or if there are those in the early days of mourning, or a *Bar Mizvah*, the preacher ought to make mention of these events, for "A word in due season, how good it is!" (Prov. 15:23). This is what our Sages, of blessed memory, have taught: Moses cautioned the Israelites that they should expound "the laws of *Pesah* on *Pesah*, the laws of *Azeret* on *Azeret* (*Shavuot*), and the laws of the Festival on the Festival (*Sukkot*) (*Meg.* 4a). The Israelites should not be like those who expatiate at great length in sermons which do not relate to the issues of the times and, only as an afterthought, append a few words about the matter which is on people's minds.

2:2) If he is delivering a eulogy, he should be very cautious not to praise the deceased beyond what is due him, for to do otherwise would actually bring shame and disgrace to the dead, rather than praise. This is the way the Talmudic passage is explained: "Be fervent in my funeral eulogy, for I will be standing there" (*Shab.* 153a), that is, be fervent in expounding my praises to say what I have actually accomplished, as if I were actually there. If, however, you praise me for what I am not and have not accomplished, it will seem as if you are eulogizing someone else in my place (cf. Rashi *ad locum*).

2:10 When (the preacher) refers to a certain matter or incident, he ought to add some of the pertinent details, such as where the event took place, what time it happened, and who were the people involved. Through doing this his words will have greater credibility.

3:1) The preacher should not make his sermon too long in order not to burden the congregation. However, he should not make his homily

too short either, for it is not right to trouble the people by having brought them out of their homes to hear something which is too brief.⁵ Rather, he ought to ponder over four principal considerations: the time, the subject matter, the place, and the man himself. Now if the weather is very warm, he ought to speak briefly. If it is quite chilly, he should speak for a longer period of time. If it is almost time for dinner, he should limit his words.

Regarding subject matter, if his subject is very painful, arousing anxiety, he should be brief. On the other hand, if his subject is a very cheerful matter, he should speak more at length.

Concerning the place, if the congregation is very cramped, and the people are standing there⁶ uncomfortably crowded together, his sermon should be kept short.

Regarding the preacher himself, if he is possessed of unusual charm and grace, then even if he speaks at some length, the people will not tire of him. The opposite would hold true of one who does not possess such an attractive personality.

4:2) It is wise and appropriate to place one's best illustrations at the beginning and at the end of the sermon. Otherwise, if you should put rather uninteresting and colorless material at the beginning of your sermon, your listeners will assume that it is indicative of your entire sermon. Then they might become impatient and leave, or they might fall asleep.

9:1) After he has composed his sermon, and its written text is before him, he should look it over carefully to be sure that it has a well-ordered quality, as well as to improve upon any particular interpretations, being very certain that they are as completely appropriate as possible. Furthermore, if he comes across something which is forced, he can either correct it or delete it altogether.⁷

10:2) When he is reproving the people, he should indicate to them that he is at the very same time chastizing himself. He ought to speak with respect for the people, never in a contemptuous or insulting manner if there happen to be some who are known to be wrongdoers present.

13:1) After he has preached, he should ask a certain trusted friend to tell him truthfully if he happened to err in any of the matters mentioned in his sermon. In this way he will be able to improve his preaching skill for the future, for "a man may examine all leprosy signs except his own" (M. Neg. 2:5).

* * *

5. At this time in Italy the sermon was not part of the Sabbath morning service, but a two-hour set piece in the late morning or early afternoon.

6. This is one of several references by Zahalon to the fact that, while scholars and community leaders were given seats, most of the people stood while the *derashot* were being given.

7. This and two other references to "forced" preaching might refer to the bizarre Sabbatian sermons which were common after the conversion of Sabbetai Zevi.

In September, 1693, Jacob Zahalon died in Ferrara, which had been his home since about 1680. On November 18, 1694, the Holy Office ruled that the *Or ha-Darshanim* might never be printed, not because of any specific theological problem inherent in it, but probably because the *Yalqut*, with which the overall work dealt, had not undergone the process of expurgation required of all Hebrew texts.

There are three manuscripts of the manual extant, an autographic text with the author's own emendations and additions in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, and one each in the Bodleian at Oxford and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Unfortunately, the influence which Jacob Zahalon had hoped to exert on preachers never materialized during the troubling times in which he lived, at least not so far as can be learned from the evidence available. Yet, perhaps it is not too late for Zahalon's wisdom and mature advice for *darshanim* to have some positive effect and provide enlightenment posthumously for his colleagues of a later era, contemporary preachers in search of the right "prescription" for reaching their people.

Schiller on the Mission of Moses

SOL LIPTZIN

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY FRIEDRICH Schiller was widely read and enthusiastically acclaimed by Jewish youth under the spell of the Enlightenment. He was, in their eyes, the supreme poet and dramatist, preaching individual freedom and national emancipation. His hymn to joy, which Beethoven incorporated into the Ninth Symphony, stirred Jewish hearts with its call for universal brotherhood embracing all children of the one God. His revolutionary dramas, from the earliest *Die Räuber* (1781) to his more mature *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), inflamed denizens of the Pale to dream of Jewish national regeneration. His influence permeated the neo-Hebrew literature of the *Maskilim* and the Yiddish literature that appealed to the less learned masses. Yet, few, if indeed any, of his Jewish readers and admirers were aware of his personal antipathy toward Jews or familiar with his prose essays dealing with the role of the Jews in world history.

When Schiller was born in 1759, the atmosphere in his native Duchy of Württemberg was still poisoned with hatred of Jews. Two decades had passed since the Württemberg financier, Jud Süß, had been hanged and his body publicly exhibited in an iron cage in order to appease the anger of the masses who blamed their ills on this Court Jew rather than on their Duke. But the memory of purported misdeeds of the hated Jew lingered on as the oppression of commoners continued unrelieved. Schiller is said to have modelled the Kosinsky episode in *Die Räuber* upon a particularly nefarious deed attributed to Jud Süß and to have conceived the robbers, Spiegelberg and Schufterle, as villainous Jews. The latter claim, however, is based on insufficient evidence.

It is unlikely that Schiller had any association with Jews during his formative years in his native townlet of Marbach or in the military academy at which he studied. The first recorded contacts were at the end of his twenties, with a Jewish moneylender in Leipzig, and, in his thirties, with a Jewish publisher. These were purely business encounters and not happy ones. During his maturer Weimar years, he did meet a few Jews but never developed a significant relationship with them. Hence, his indifference toward the contemporary Jewish scene was undisturbed and his childhood prejudices remained unchallenged.

Schiller was not only poet and dramatist; he was also philosopher and historian. As philosopher, his most lasting contribution was to aesthetic theory; as historian, his most notable contributions were his studies on the

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Thirty Years' War and on the revolt of the Dutch against the Spanish Crown. But Schiller also made use of Biblical material for historical studies. In his lectures, published in 1790, under the long title, *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der Mosaischen Urkunde*, he let his fertile imagination fill in gaps in the Biblical narrative and his dramatic talent vivify myths about Biblical characters. His portrait of Moses anticipated the insights and aberrations of Sigmund Freud's work, *Moses and Monotheism* (1937–1939), and may, indeed, have influenced the father of psychoanalysis. This study, contained in *Die Sendung Moses*, 1790, illumines Schiller's attitude toward historical Judaism, for it was the historical role of the ancient people from whom Christianity sprang that interested him far more than did Jewish contemporaries with whom he had little to do and even less sympathy.

Die Sendung Moses, originally delivered as a lecture at the University of Jena, emphasized the founding of the Jewish religious and national entity by Moses as one of the supreme achievements of mankind, one which had a lasting influence throughout the following generations. Schiller held that neither Christianity nor Islam would have come into existence if not for the innovations of Moses, primarily his popularization of monotheism. While the belief in one God had penetrated into the minds of individual wise men among the heathen, it had not seeped down to the masses who continued everywhere to worship a multiplicity of gods. It was Moses who, by the power of his charismatic personality, persuaded an entire people, the Hebrews, to be the first nation to accept monotheism. In Schiller's opinion, the Hebrews were not especially worthy to play such a role in world history. He regarded them as a depraved national group, both in ancient times and in his own days. Yet, so strange are the ways of God: this impure vessel contained precious ingredients of truth, which it dispensed to others before it was deservedly scattered and dispersed. Schiller believed that he was being even-handed in his historical judgment when he stated that, though it would be an exaggeration to ascribe to the Hebrew people a significance which it did not deserve, it would be equally wrong to deny it its one meritorious achievement, the acceptance of the religious doctrines preached by Moses.

Schiller accepted the Biblical account that the nomadic family of Hebrews, numbering seventy souls, had come to Egypt upon the invitation of a Pharaoh and had settled in Goshen and that, in the course of four centuries, these nomads experienced a population explosion which aroused the apprehension of a later Pharaoh, who felt that these strangers in the heart of the country could constitute a danger to the realm. Schiller saw political wisdom in this ruler's attempt to make of these unreliable and unassimilable nomads a productive, sedentary group, and to reduce their numbers by ever-harsher measures of compulsory toil. The Hebrews, who had increased to about two million, were pent up in such crowded conditions in Goshen that the inevitable result was uncleanness and

recurrent epidemics of contagious diseases which made them abhorrent to their Egyptian neighbors. Filthiness and scabbiness, according to Schiller, have ever thereafter characterized Jewish settlements. Leprosy, which raged among the ancient Hebrews in Egypt, was handed down by them to their progeny, generation after generation, slowly poisoning the Jewish race. Schiller named as his authoritative sources Greek and Roman writers who based themselves, to a great extent, on the no longer extant anti-Jewish diatribes of the Egyptian historian, Maneto, of the third century B.C.E.

When harsh servitude and leprosy, the Jewish disease, failed to decimate the Hebrew population, a second and severer measure, which Schiller disapproves of as inhumane, was introduced by Pharaoh. All midwives were ordered to kill the male children born to Hebrews. To make sure that they did so, hired murderers roamed through the dwellings of Goshen and killed any baby boys spared by the midwives. It was hoped that, within a few generations, the abhorred Hebrew group would be exterminated. This would, indeed, have happened, if not for Moses, the savior.

In interpreting the role of Moses, Schiller faced the same problem as did the Biblical chronicler—this savior's origin. If Moses was a child of the debased and enslaved Hebrews, where and how did he acquire his knowledge of Egyptian courtly ways so that he could negotiate with Pharaoh, or of religious mysteries so that he could arrive at his monotheistic creed? If, on the other hand, he was an Egyptian, why should he be interested in the loathed and disease-ridden Hebrews, whom the humanitarian Schiller characterizes as the most savage, most malevolent and most depraved people on the face of the earth, an unheroic people of almost animal-like stupidity?

The providential force that guides the universe found the answer: it took a Hebrew infant, removed it from its savage people, and gave it an opportunity to partake of Egyptian wisdom. In this way, a Hebrew, educated as an Egyptian, became the instrument by which his nation was delivered from slavery. Schiller followed the Biblical description of the exposure of Moses among the bulrushes of the Nile, his discovery by Pharaoh's daughter, and his being handed over to a Hebrew wetnurse. From her, his true Hebrew mother, he learned the language and ways of the enslaved group and was imbued with sympathy for them. When the boy was returned to the princess, she adopted him as her own child, gave him the Egyptian name of Moses, and provided him with a princely upbringing. At priestly academies, he was introduced to the most advanced learning and to the mysteries of the religious establishment. This wisdom later found expression in his deeds and doctrines.

It was among the Egyptian priests that the concept of monotheism first arose. The original, fortunate discoverer of this sublime idea did not dare to give it wide currency because it would have undermined the

theocratic, political structure that was based on polytheism. But he did seek out among the members of his circle talented, trusted disciples to whom he could safely transmit his precious, new insight about the one God. This insight, bequeathed for many generations from one thinker to another, finally became the mysterious property of a small coterie of priests who were able to grasp its significance and to develop it further. Moses belonged to that select group from whom no priestly secrets were withheld. The wisdom of the Torah is, therefore, Egyptian wisdom.

A century before the hieroglyphic inscriptions on Akhnaton's religious reformation were deciphered and a century and a half before Sigmund Freud's theory of an Egyptian Moses, Schiller credited the votaries of the mysteries of Memphis and of Heliopolis with the religious innovations embodied in the Torah, such as monotheism, specific priestly rituals, circumcision, belief in immortality, the ark of God, and even the name of the one supreme deity. These doctrines and practices supposedly impressed Moses during his formative years under priestly tutelage but, like his teachers, he had to be very circumspect in espousing them. When he was forced to flee Egypt because of his impulsive killing of an Egyptian taskmaster who was mistreating a Hebrew laborer, he found the leisure in his desert-loneliness to reflect on his people's oppressed lot and on the religious mysteries to which he had been introduced. During the following years, when he was degraded to a drear existence as a herdsman in Midian, he often recalled that he had been a prince in Egypt and an initiate into profound mysteries.

Amidst the silence and solitude of his exile in the wilderness, there arose in him the desire to return to Egypt and to liberate his suffering kinsmen from their slavish existence. But, first, he had to awaken in them hope, courage, self-confidence, and enthusiasm. This could be accomplished only by imbuing them with belief in a supernatural, heavenly power that was especially interested in them. If he could only convince them that he, Moses, shepherd and prince, was the instrument and emissary of this divine power, then he could lead them out of bondage and on to freedom. Obviously, the rabble of Hebrew slaves, the scum of Egypt, was incapable of comprehending the universal, abstract deity that he himself had come to accept when he had been initiated into the mysteries that were revealed to but a few priestly sages. But even if he could get the Hebrews to grasp his grandiose vision, they would not believe that an all-encompassing deity would be interested in them more than in any other people. However, if he could identify his philosophical, invisible God with the national God of their ancestors and if he could convince them that this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had at long last attained to supremacy and had succeeded in annihilating all other gods, thus becoming the sole and omnipotent Ruler of the Universe, then they would become followers of this Lord of Hosts who could perform great deeds for them and could lead them on to victory against their oppressors. And, so,

Moses undertook his educational mission to eradicate the superstitions that had encrusted the national God of the Hebrew slaves and to elevate this God to supreme eminence in their eyes.

To succeed in the great task which he had set for himself, Moses had to perform miracles. Schiller, the deist of the Century of Enlightenment, makes the comment: "There is no doubt that he really performed these miracles but I leave it to each person to figure out how he performed them and how they are to be understood." At any rate, Schiller feels that the miracles achieved their purpose. Moses did succeed in overcoming all difficulties and in leading his kinsmen out of Egypt. He did implant in them self-reliance, courage, hope and enthusiasm. Having deprived them of a country, however, he could not leave them in the desert. He had to gain for them a new homeland. This meant that he had to prepare them for the armed conquest of a territory beyond the wilderness of Sinai, a conquest that could be undertaken only by a united people that would not disintegrate into separate tribes but that would be governed by a common will, best embodied in a constitution and a code of laws that would be unanimously accepted. Such unanimous approval was possible only if all the ordinances were presented as commandments emanating from God. Therefore, Moses, the brilliant statesman, grounded them in divine sanction. He took the God of the Egyptian mysteries and unveiled his secret attributes before the Hebrews. Moses was, thus, the first person to disclose to an entire people the religious truths, including the concept of a single Supreme Being, which until then had been the property of a few wise men. He could not, of course, give the Hebrews the intelligence to grasp the new religion with their reason, since their rational faculties had not yet been sufficiently developed, but he did get them to accept this religion blindly because of their faith in his leadership and to make it the basis for the Hebraic theocratic state. And so it came about that the unworthy Hebrews became the impure vessel for the pure truth of monotheism and the Hebrew Torah the religious scroll that embodied the best of Egyptian religious wisdom.

In his 1790 essay on Moses, Schiller did not go as far as did Sigmund Freud a century and a half later, when he stripped this Prophet and Lawgiver entirely of Jewish ancestry by having him born of Egyptian parents and not merely having him reared by an Egyptian princess. Schiller did, however, anticipate Freud by tracing to Egyptian mysteries the monotheism and some of the religious commandments of the Torah bequeathed by Moses to the Jews and, through them, to Christianity and Islam.

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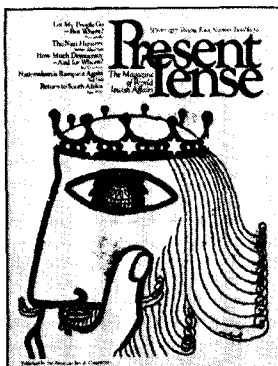
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On renewed interest in Judaica among young Americans: "The young people perceived themselves as survivors of the failures of Jewish education and the false values of America." Sylvia Rothchild.

On Israel's Nature Reserves: "It may be that General Yoffe's animals will somehow lead the people of the Middle East to peace one day. But the tanks were in the mountains, waiting. The real beast in the desert was still man." Robert Spero.



On being a Jewish poet: "The truest Jewish poetry will be written out of the inward preoccupations of people who happen to be Jews." M. L. Rosenthal.

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On Israel's Arab intellectuals: "I am an Israeli but I cannot be a Jew." Naomi Shepherd.

On American foreign policy: "American companies, which for

so long we have considered 'our companies,' have in fact become the policing agents of the Arabs' boycott against the U.S." Paul Dickson.

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PRESENT TENSE

The Magazine of World Jewish Affairs

The Rabbinate In This Country

Rabbi: The American Experience. By MURRAY POLNER. New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1977. 213 pp.

Reviewed by RICHARD HIRSH

DESPITE THE CONTINUING centrality of the American rabbinate, a comprehensive study has yet to be made of that institution in contemporary Jewish life. Therefore, Murray Polner's *Rabbi: The American Experience*, is a welcome addition to the limited research which has been conducted so far. Concentrating on the congregational rabbi, Polner has assembled a series of portraits, emphasizing the efforts that are made to bring a maximal Judaism to a minimally interested community. What emerges is not only a commentary on the rabbinate, but on American Jewry as well.

The composite picture that is drawn is of a professional generally satisfied with his/her position, but frequently frustrated by an inability to move beyond the struggle to maintain a faltering status quo. The degree of frustration is in proportion to the isolation from centers of Jewish life, as is evident in the rather lengthy section devoted to the small-town rabbi. Polner's survey makes it clear that the transformation—from a teacher of Torah and leader of a community into a priestly functionary ministering to a congregation—is the core of the dissatisfaction voiced by almost all of the rabbis who are cited. To one who was schooled in the traditions of Judaism, and eager to transmit Torah, the encounter with the community is often shocking and frequently disillusioning, as the chapter on seminary students bears out. In varying degrees, the rabbi is expected to fulfill many

roles, from surrogate psychologist to emissary to the Gentiles. Beyond that, s/he is expected to solemnize life-cycle events and, in general, act as the "official Jew." There is little opportunity for teaching, and little demand that the rabbi devote more time to this formerly primary responsibility.

The American Jewish community emerges as one largely motivated by psychological and sociological factors rather than by religious conviction. The spectre of anti-Semitism, while no longer a dominant element in the main centers of Jewish life, is still a determinative factor for many Jews, especially in the South. Interest in the religious content of the tradition, as well as the civilizational aspects, is negligible. The real power in the community is in the hands of the secular elements; hence, the influence of the rabbi is insignificant when the really important decisions are made. The community defines what the role of the rabbi is to be, and most rabbis find themselves forced to compromise on many issues as a result of this situation. Polner gives excellent examples of the tensions involved in the rabbi-congregation relationship in two chapters dealing with social activism. One outlines the involvement of a Long Island "suburban activist" rabbi, while the other deals with the Southern rabbinate and its role in the civil rights struggle of the early 1960s. Though the *sitz im leben* of these two may be distinct in many ways, the reactions of the congregants generally follow a similar pattern. Consideration of Gentile response is still a source of tension, while enthusiasm for rabbinic participation in these "non-religious" areas is lacking.

In a book as brief as this one, any attempt at a comprehensive survey is bound to produce some peculiar results. For example, almost a third

of the work is devoted to small-town and Southern rabbis, who generally share the same situations and characteristics. But, since American Jewry is largely clustered around urban centers, a more conclusive evaluation might have emerged if more space were devoted to the rabbis who serve those communities. It is also unfortunate that hardly any attention is paid to the developing institution of the female rabbi, which, though a nascent phenomenon, promises to be a significant one in American Jewry. By concentrating the discussion of Orthodoxy on the men in the pulpit, Polner fails to convey the influence which that segment of Judaism really has on all segments of American Jewish life, an influence which is effected largely through non-synagogue means. While he states at the outset that he is limiting his examination to the congregational rabbinate, it is nonetheless true that, by failing to take into account the non-pulpit rabbis who may be in Hillel foundations, Jewish agencies and elsewhere, he misses much of what is going on in the evolution of the function of the American rabbi. If the role of the rabbi in shaping the future is, as Polner concludes, "to seek a dominant place for the Jewish religion and Jewish scholarship in an unbelieving synagogue and non-synagogue population," then it is today clearer than ever that the title "rabbi" will have to be enlarged to incorporate service to all aspects of Jewish life in an effort to create an organic American Jewry which has both structure and vision.

RICHARD HIRSH is a fourth-year student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Temple University.

History In Our Day

Abba Eban: An Autobiography. By ABBA EBAN. New York. Random House, 1977. 512 pp. \$15.00.

The Revolt. By MENACHEM BEGIN. Revised Edition. New York. Nash Publishing Co., 1977. 386 pp. \$12.95.

Reviewed by JOSEPH P. STERNSTEIN.

IF ANY ONE LESSON can be gleaned from a reading of these two volumes, it is this: trust in the reliability of international diplomats is usually misplaced. Duplicity, outright reneging, dissembling evasion of commitments, all the "virtues" of the diplomatic craft are highlighted in these accounts. Where the impact is relatively trivial, one may shrug the shoulders and chalk it all up to experience. But there are instances where the consequences might be grave, affecting untold numbers of lives and ravaging the fabric of international peace and decorum. Eban's account of his 1967 frenetic peregrinations, pleading for fulfillment of 1957 pledges, capped by the arrogant rebuff of DeGaulle, "Monsieur Eban, 1967 is not 1957!", and Begin's description of the repeated betrayal of British pledges in the underground war against the Mandatory regime, are but two grim illustrations of the Psalmist's dictum, "Place not your trust in Princes" (a favorite and often repeated caveat of Abba Hillel Silver).

That we have not yet emerged out of the thicket of betrayed pledges even today—President Carter's insistence on the all-or-nothing "package" of arms to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in violation of a specific and unconditional contractual agreement consummated between the United

States and Israel in September, 1975, is a case in point—should be apparent to all. A careful reading of these two volumes is a requirement for the newly enlisted members of the “Order of Trembling Israelites.” They will learn from the bitter lessons of history that “sweet reasonableness” is not the unshakable bedrock to which enduring relationships can be anchored. In fact, in view of Eban’s recent statements as a vocal member of the opposition in Israel’s Knesset concerning relations between Israel and the United States, he, himself, could do worse than re-read a splendid passage in his own book, (p. 607), describing the unavoidable necessity to gird oneself and *stand alone*, if so required, for the sake of survival. Was it not Golda Meir who remarked drily that it was better to be alive and unpopular than dead and lamented?

Aside from their contemporary relevance and substantive relationship, no books could have been stylistically more disparate than the two volumes at hand: Eban’s—urbane, polished and “resonant” (a favorite adjective of his); Begin’s—passionate, romantic, full of pathos. While the time span overlaps only partially, the two accounts complement each other; Begin unfolds, from within, the inner travails of the *yishuv* fighting the enemy on the spot, while Eban recounts, from without, the joined battle on the diplomatic fronts, ranging, as it did, over far-flung geographical terrains.

This reviewer served as Assistant to the Executive Director of the famed American Zionist Emergency Council from 1945 to 1949 and I recall the first meeting of the Executive of the AZEC when Dr. Silver presented a new liaison to the U.N. staff: a tall, rather plump young man, heavily bespectacled, seemingly nervous and dif-

ident, somewhat fidgety, possessed of a charming British accent, and quite precise in his initial report of developments. His name was Aubrey Eban. Of course, it was sad testimony to the relations between the various geographical sections of Zionism that this bright young man was totally unknown in this country. Undoubtedly, travel difficulties were a contributing factor to the organizational distance, but it cannot be denied that the relative cultural insularity of American Zionism blocked intimate knowledge of the European counterpart. One must also ask why others did not rise so swiftly to the forefront of activity as did Eban. The answer, all would agree, lies in his eloquence. (Incidentally, from reading this autobiography, one is reminded repeatedly that its author is not the last to be aware of this answer.) Fortunately for all of us, Eban was present at the right time and the right place, when it was the State of Israel, and not the Jewish Agency or the World Zionist Executive, which was summoned to the U.N. Council table to plead its own case.

That he shouldered his responsibility magnificently is for history to attest. That responsibility as interlocutor for, and spokesman of, Israel was frequently burdened by the onerous weight of fighting the battle of a small, beleaguered state resisting the onslaughts of a nefarious amalgam of Arab states, oil magnates, opportunistic politicians and duplicitous State Department Arabists. But the burden was periodically lifted by moments of significant achievement. I particularly recall his powerful address at the United Nations at the end of the Six-Day War. It was one of the peak moments of Israel’s still new political history, when a Jewish representative delivered a proper “dressing-down” to the conclave of

the nations of the world, not excluding the superpower Soviet Russia. It was an effort suitably appropriate to the matchless military achievement on the battlefield.

Particularly instructive, however, is the story of Israel's agony in the weeks prior to the Six-Day War. It is a sobering and, at the same time, strengthening lesson. Credibility of states in diplomatic intercourse? Reliance on the "word-of-honor"—even written—of governments at the sacrifice of one's own strength? Buying "good-will" and popularity by being "flexible"? Read and re-read and re-read the previously noted passage, beginning on page 607, wherein Eban analyzes the excessive emphasis that Diaspora Jews place on "image."

One final point of praise to be offered for Eban's book. His are some of the rare accolades to be meted out by Zionist historians to American Zionism which, under the leadership of Abba Hillel Silver, rose to historic heights in waging a mighty political battle in the key arena of the United States, simultaneous with the valorous war of resistance fought by the *yishuv*. There has been a sinful ignoring of this crucial element of Zionist history and only recently has the silence been shattered.

Begin's book (a re-issue of a previous publication), has sprung onto the list of best-sellers, doubtless due to the sudden demand of those who want to understand the stuff out of which the new, and almost totally unexpected, Prime Minister of Israel is wrought. Those who scan these pages with this expectation in mind will not be disappointed, for Begin's memoirs emerge out of the bowels of travail, battle, suffering, discipline and tenacity. (There may be those who may wish to replace the last adjective with "stubbornness".)

In the matrix of contemporary events, particularly for the many readers who were either yet unborn or were too young to remember, it seems almost inconceivable that the present, democratically-elected leader of the State of Israel was, at a crucial period of modern Jewish history, a hated and reviled figure—and this from fellow Jews—and that the organization which he headed was scathingly castigated by many in official Zionist leadership; that he was hunted by *fellow Jews* who joined forces with the British police in Palestine. Those days and that *mis-encène*—so incredible to the new incredulous—would appear to be shrouded in the fog of distant antiquity. Yet the State is so young and the years of which Begin writes were only some three decades ago. Therefore, the memory is so fresh and the era is still with us.

Those who meet leaders of underground movements are often-times impressed by the contrast between their true demeanor:—quiet, unobtrusive, personally warm and courtly—and their public image as moulded by the media: sinister, ruthless, murderous. The starkness of the contrast is delineated, somewhat poignantly indeed, in the story of Begin's ordeals as leader of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*. This book permits us to peek behind the curtain of clandestine and conspiratorial operations, particularly as they affected the destiny of the Jewish people in Palestine. That the British wielded a heartless blunderbuss was known to all observers of the Middle East scene. What we did not know, and what we are made aware of here, was the pain and injury wrought by the fratricidal combat between Jew and Jew in the pre-state *yishuv*. It is, therefore, powerful testimony to the innate democracy of Jewish character that the transition from

inner strife to parliamentary discipline and decorum was effected so quickly and smoothly. Not that antagonism has been completely erased or that residual—I hope, vestigial and disappearing—friction is not any more evident. But, even in thirty years, the tensility of Israeli democracy effectively confines this enmity to the political arena; the ballot box and the Knesset floor are the instruments and the forum for combat today.

Begin's book spans the years from his incarceration in a Russian labor camp, his journey to Palestine, his assumption of leadership at a moment of dispirited disarray in the ranks of the Irgun, and up to the period of the proclamation of the State. It is written with the pathos and passion of one who has been driven into a corner and has fought to extricate himself and his people. Objective history it may not be, but that it comprises the stuff—real, grim, tough—from which some future account will be fashioned is undeniable. And it is truly important that this story be more widely known, for in the thirty years and more that the Labor party was in power in Israel, the Diaspora has known, become familiar, and comfortable with, only the leaders and personalities of that party. It is therefore, only natural that Zionist history—favoritism and anathema—should have been colored for most Diaspora Jews.

For example, let us examine two incidents: Deir Yassin and *Altalena*. During the most critical days of the War of Liberation, on April 9, 1948, the Irgun, then fighting in coordination with the Haganah, was assigned the task of clearing a sector adjacent to Bab-El-Wad, the easily choked-off, twisting road leading to the hills of Jerusalem. Specifically, the Arabs had been using Deir Yassin, a little

village off the road, as a military base imbedded in civilian surroundings (a tactic commonly in use even today with all-too-frequent tragic, misunderstood and distorted consequences). From Deir Yassin the Arabs would foray regularly to ambush the envoys who were attempting to relieve beleaguered Jerusalem. The Irgun launched the attack. Here the conflict of reports emerges. According to Arab sources, the Irgun "massacred" hundreds of innocent Arab civilians. At the time, the Haganah accepted this version, joined in the condemnation of the Irgun, and issued an apology. According to the Irgun, however, and as carefully reported by Begin, the Irgun, at grave risk to themselves, brought up a loudspeaker and warned innocent civilians of the impending attack, urging them to leave the village. Some did, but others remained and were killed in the battle. The overlooked denouement of this episode is that, after a thorough investigation, the Israeli Foreign Office issued a carefully documented report and fully supported the Irgun version. This report is available on request.

The tragedy of the *Altalena* was more complex. In June, 1948, the Irgun succeeded in loading a ship in France with a substantial number of Jewish soldiers and a large supply of munitions. It was a time of transition, between truces, after the State had come into being. Ben Gurion was valiantly structuring a Jewish army and the *yishuv* was being recast into a State; discipline was imperative. Here now, again, is where accounts diverge. In brief, Ben Gurion demanded that the entire shipload be placed under the official army command. The allegation is that Begin refused. Therefore, the *Altalena* was destroyed by the Israeli army off the beach of Tel Aviv. Begin denies the

allegation and reports his own version in the book. In essence, he claims that he was prepared to follow a clear agreement to which, he alleges, Ben Gurion—through an official intermediary—and he were parties. He makes flat accusations to which this writer has, as yet, seen no refutation.

Both of these incidents, as well as the explosion at the King David Hotel, are described in detail. Whichever version one chooses to accept, the agony and the tragedy of the war between brothers—both facing a common enemy—are there to remember and lament. Alas, the remains of the bitterness still fester.

Begin inveighs again and again against the irresponsible use of the

name and concept of "terrorist." The indiscriminate analogy between the PLO and the Irgun still vexes us, particularly by the holier-than-thou lecturers who foist themselves upon us. What emerges from this account is that the Irgun *never* launched a deliberate attack on innocent civilians. Its target was always military. I cannot recall any military target ever attacked by the terrorist P.L.O.

These volumes are remarkable memoirs. Israel's course through modern history cannot be properly understood without them.

JOSEPH P. STERNSTEIN is *rabbi of Beth Sholom Congregation, Roslyn Heights, N.Y. and the immediate past president of the American Zionist Organization.*

COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM

The series of articles on "Interfaith At Fifty" in the summer number of JUDAISM is an exceptionally interesting collection. We really do need such articles and many more of that kind in this world of feuds, hostilities, and guerilla warfare. Precisely because of my appreciation of the general excellence of these chapters, I call your attention to three regrettable omissions: Gypsies, Mohammedans (especially Arabs), and George Eliot.

1. Gypsies. 250,000 or 500,000 (depending on the encyclopedia one consults) Gypsies were wiped out in the same holocaust that destroyed millions of Jews. Since nobody else has taken notice of them, is not the cause of the Gypsies a proper program for the NCCJ to consider?

2. Mohammedans. With the vast wealth in the hands of Arab oil plutocrats, as well as the great danger to the isolated little State of Israel, ought not the NCCJ make a strong effort to enable Mohammedans and Jews to understand one another? To me this is priority number one.

3. George Eliot. In an "Interfaith At Fifty" series, should not the great pioneer and anticipator of the interfaith principle be given honorable mention? The great words are contained in a saying of Daniel Deronda, never mentioned by critics. In Chapter I, talking to his mother, Daniel says, "What I have been most trying to do for fifteen years is to have some understanding of those who differ from myself." Is not this virtually a statement of the aims of NCCJ?

Baltimore, Md.

BENJAMIN SZOLD LEVIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

Blu Greenberg's suggestive article on Rabbi Jacob Emden contains, among other things, an intriguing account of Emden's interpretation of Pauline doctrine in regard to different faiths (JUDAISM, Summer 1978).

Emden is said to quote Paul in I Corinthians 7:18 on circumcision in such a way as to lead us to suppose Paul advocates that each person should abide by his own faith.

At best the passage in question has been misunderstood somewhere along the line, for Paul says clearly that his ruling on circumcision applies only to members of the church itself. In fact, Paul is careful to declare that both circumcision and uncircumcision, presumably in the purely physical sense, count for nothing in the church (Ibid., 7:19).

When Christianity became, in the fourth century, the official religion of Rome, the circumcised were accepted in the Christian movement on the strict understanding that circumcision cease to have any meaning. The guiding principle was that, in the name of order and stability, 'Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called' (Ibid., 7:20). But, to begin with, he must be called.

Now, if this is the precondition of Emden's interpretation, I am inclined to acknowledge that Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits is likely to be right when he suggests that the Jewish-Christian dialogue in its present form may lead nowhere in particular. In any case, a Christian is no longer a Christian if he does not intend to convert us to Christianity—that is, after all, its whole *raison d'être*; alternatively, if he still plans to Christianize us we are in a decidedly inferior, not to say ridiculously impossible, position if we have no plans to Judaize him.

In many ways Blu Greenberg's article betrays the unhappy truth that Christian tradition, in reflecting Roman imperial policy, is opposed, almost without exception, to just about every

Jewish cultural directive. Emden's construct may be the ideal framework of Jewish-Christian relations, but let us not forget that it was his implacable war against a Jewish sect, the Sabbatarians, that tore apart the Jewish people of the day, for what he did not perceive in the New Testament he saw in the Zohar.

Johannesburg, Rep. of S. Africa

NIEL HIRSCHSON

BLU GREENBERG *replies*:

All that you say about official Christianity is true. Indeed, Emden was being *dan l' kav z'khut*—beneficent in his judgment of Christianity. He pointed up the ideal and overlooked the fundamental adversary relationship of Christianity to Judaism which, unchallenged, leaves small hope of ever attaining permanent rapprochement.

And yet. In our own lifetime—largely out of a profound awareness of Christian guilt in the *shoah*, we are witnessing the beginnings of repentance. We find Christians of good faith redefining the relationship, and speaking out for Israel, for Soviet Jewry, for a place within Christian theology for a Judaism that is honored and respected. We find the official Church turning itself around on millenia-old themes such as deicide, eternal culpability, perfidy, Judaism-as-a-relic-of-the past, forfeiture of chosenness and other mean teachings. This is all a radical break with the past, since a) Christianity in all its power was never marked by an emphasis on collective repentance, and b) the first “turnings,” as in the classical sense of *teshuvah*, are always the hardest. Even one generation ago we did not have the Eckardts, the Flannerys, the Littells, the Cardinal Beas. And though they are still the minority, nevertheless, they are having a ripple effect in their own Church.

So, if some Christians are making different claims for the Church today, why should we tell them that they are not? If they tell us that they respect and

love us for what we are—Jews—should we tell them that they want to convert us? If they put themselves on the line when we are in trouble, should we tell them that nothing has changed, that they are still foe and not friend? And what about Sister Rose who wears a *hai* pin purchased during one of the many pilgrimages she has lead, taking American Christians to experience Jewish Israel, with the first stop at Yad Vashem and the second at the Kokel? What shall I say to the fact that she studies Bible with Rashi's commentary, that she organizes protests and speaks out for Soviet Jews, that she wrote a doctoral thesis, that ultimately provoked a fundamental revision of Catholic elementary school teaching on the Jews? Shall I tell her that she is making a mistake, that she doesn't understand the whole “raison d' être” of her religion, that she is not behaving as a Christian should?

In truth, there is some part of me that is anxious, apprehensive that ecumenism is just a passing fancy; that in a generation or two your descendants and mine will once again be persecuted, that the Eckardts and the Sister Roses will be silenced and, once again, we shall be totally alone, isolated. That part of me identifies with Berkovits and with you. But there is another part of me that fills up when Christians defend my people, when they are open to my community, when they appreciate my very Jewishness.

It is that part of me that flirts with the notion that we just might be at the beginning of a real *teshuvah* on the part of the Church.

Thus, I cannot completely close myself off and huddle with my community, comfortable as that might be. My best hope lies in a proliferation of good Christians, in the grass roots and in the hierarchy. I must try to encourage them to grapple more fully with the enormous problems that remain—the Gospel untruths about the Jews, the lack of official recognition of Israel, the silence of the main Church when we are threatened.

If I act as if nothing is new, then surely my children's children will be as vulnerable as ever. If I make some effort, then perhaps, they will not. It is

that margin of hope that makes the effort inescapable—even worthwhile.

Riverdale, N.Y.

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